



## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

### **DNRC/FIVE VALLEYS LAND TRUST LAND EXCHANGE Mineral County, Montana**

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DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
State of Montana  
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Project Name: DNRC/FVLT/Tarkio Land Exchange  
Proposed Implementation Date: July 2007  
Proponent: Five Valleys Land Trust, Missoula, MT  
Location: Middle Clark Fork River corridor, from Cyr to St. Regis  
County: Mineral

## I. TYPE and PURPOSE OF ACTION

### A. Introduction

This environmental assessment evaluates a proposed land exchange between the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT) involving various parcels of State Trust Land and parcels owned by FVLT located in Mineral County, Montana.

**State Trust Lands:** Five parcels of State Trust Lands totaling 504.46 acres have been considered for inclusion in this exchange. They include:

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| 1. St. Regis –NE, NE4NW4, Section 24, T18N-R28W   | 200.00 acres |
| 2. Slowey Triangle-Lots 1,4,5 and 8, Section 8, T17N-R27W<br>(less 22.1 acres patented railroad right-of-way)   | 42.46 acres  |
| 3. Slowey Riverfront-Lot 4 and part of lot 3, Section 16, T17N-R27W<br>(less 4.1 acres patented railroad right-of-way)  | 53.41 acres  |
| 4. Camp Four-Those portions of Government Lot 1, SW4SE4,<br>N2SW4 lying northeast of the Mullan Road Section 12,T16N,R26W<br>Excepting those portions conveyed in Book E of Deeds Page 229,<br>Book 7 of Deeds Page 179, Book 15 of Deeds Pages 43 and 455<br>and Book 2 of Miscellaneous Real Estate Page 498. | 145.78 acres |
| 5. Chute Gulch-Lots 1 and 2, Section 18, T16N-R25W  | 62.81 acres  |

**Total.....504.46 acres**

**Five Valleys Land Trust Lands:** Four parcels of land totaling 581.80 acres have been proposed for inclusion in this exchange. They include:

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. Tarkio Flat-NE4NE4, E2E2NW4NE4, S2N2, S2, Section 35, T15N-R25W  | 530.00acres         |
| 2. Tarkio Railroad-Tract 1 Portion A&B on COS 376, a parcel in the SE4 further described as Tract A on COS 373, CMSP RR R/W in E2NE4 as described on COS 339, excepting a parcel conveyed to BPA and recorded in Drawer 1 of Deeds on Card 3233-3233A and a parcel conveyed to JA and RL Peterson recorded in Drawer 2 of Deeds on Card 6306 described as Portion A on Certificate of Survey 367, Section 34, T15N-R25W | 34.40 acres         |
| 3. Freezeout Gulch-Portions of Government lots 1,2,3 and 7, Section 34, T15N-R24W   | 11.02 acres         |
| 4. Cyr Bridge-Portions of Government lots 1 and 2, Section 36, T15N-R24W  | 6.38 acres          |
| <b>Total.....</b>   | <b>581.80 acres</b> |

## B. Background

The proposed Tarkio Land Exchange is an indirect result of the Alberton Gorge Land Exchange that culminated in 2004 with the acquisition of 320 acres of land along the Alberton Gorge in Mineral County, Montana, by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP). The acquisition was facilitated by two conservation groups: River Network, a national river advocacy organization with headquarters in Portland, Oregon; and Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT), a western Montana regional land Trust based in Missoula, MT. The role of the conservation groups was to purchase the lands along the Alberton Gorge from then-owner, Northwest Energy, to protect their unique natural, scenic and recreational values from residential development. At purchase, the lands along the Alberton Gorge were then transferred to MFWP. In exchange, FVLT received approximately 564 acres of land near Tarkio formerly held by the U.S. Forest Service.

The disposition of the Tarkio land (FVLT tracts 1 & 2) was a major concern highlighted during the environmental analysis and public participation process for the Alberton Gorge project. Resource professionals recognized that the Tarkio land contained high values for its timber resource, as well as for wildlife habitat. As land with a long history of public ownership and use, it was also recognized as having significant recreation values. Neighboring landowners were concerned about the loss of public access to the property, should it be sold into private ownership. At the same time, the Mineral County Commissioners were concerned that the loss of private land tax base related to the public acquisition of the gorge lands would have negative implications for the county.

A possible solution was reached when DNRC indicated that the Tarkio parcel had been identified as a high priority parcel for acquisition, due to its timber resource and timber production potential; and its location, adjacent to two sections of State-owned Trust Lands. DNRC agreed to identify parcels downstream along the Clark Fork Corridor in Mineral County that could be considered for exchange for the Tarkio land. Once exchanged to a private organization, these parcels could be made available for private purchase and potential residential development in Mineral County.

In February of 2002, River Network submitted an application for a land exchange to DNRC, proposing to exchange the Tarkio lands it would receive at the completion of the Alberton Gorge Land Exchange for certain DNRC administered parcels of State Trust Land. Five Valleys Land Trust subsequently assumed River Network's role in the Alberton Gorge transaction in December, 2003, and submitted to DNRC a revised application for a land exchange on February 19, 2004. Preliminary approval of the revised application was confirmed on April 22, 2004. Upon completion of the Alberton Gorge Land Exchange on November 22, 2004, FVLT assumed ownership of the lands now proposed for exchange with DNRC.

On February 14, 2005, lessees on the parcels being considered for exchange were notified of the proposal. General public notification and scoping began soon thereafter, with the official scoping period concluding on May 13, 2005. After review of scoping comments and examining the lands proposed for inclusion relative to DNRC exchange criteria, the exchange proposal was forwarded to the Land Board for their consideration. The proposal included more land, both in total value and total acreage, than necessary to complete the exchange, allowing for the inclusion of certain parcels and the exclusion of others as values are established and other parcel-by-parcel considerations are identified and evaluated. With that understanding, the Land Board considered the proposal and authorized DNRC staff and FVLT to proceed with environmental analysis and appraisals necessary to fashion a final package of lands for consideration.

## C. Purpose

The purpose of the land exchange is to:

- **Consolidate** State Trust Land holdings in the Tarkio area of Mineral County.
- **Improve access** for land management activities on State Trust Land.
- Allow for the **eventual sale** and **private development** of lands that would be transferred to FVLT in the exchange, thereby enhancing the private land tax base of Mineral County.
- **Allow for the continued management of lands** at Tarkio and Cyr for their revenue generating potential and for the public recreational and wildlife habitat values they possess.

## D. Description of Proposed Exchange

The Five Valleys Land Trust proposes to transfer four parcels of land totaling 581.8 acres including 1.67 miles of stream frontage to the State School Trust in exchange for a combination of lands selected from five parcels now under consideration. Approval of a final exchange package will be subject to certain criteria employed by DNRC and the Land Board to evaluate exchange proposals.

Lands received by the State in any exchange must:

- 1) Be of equal or greater value than State land being exchanged.
- 2) Provide equal or greater frontage on navigable lakes and streams
- 3) Result in providing equal or greater income to the Trust.
- 4) Provide equal or greater acreage than the State lands exchanged.
- 5) Serve to consolidate or at least have a neutral effect upon the consolidation of State lands.
- 6) Be as likely to increase in value or revenue potential as the State land exchanged.
- 7) Not diminish the amount of access to State lands or other public lands.

Criteria numbered one through 3 (value, lands bordering water bodies, and income) must be met in any exchange. In the event that a land exchange is clearly in the State's best interest and the presence of outstanding public benefits outweighs the absence of one of the other exchange criteria (acreage, consolidation, potential for appreciation, access), satisfaction of those criteria may be waived to facilitate the exchange.

### Appraisals Used to Identify a Balanced Exchange

Lands Considered for Exchange:

St. Regis	\$993,000
Slowey Triangle	\$ 93,000
Slowey Riverfront	\$230,000
Camp Four	\$875,000
<u>Chute Gulch</u>	<u>\$293,000</u>
Total Valuation	\$2,484,000

FVLT Lands Offered for Exchange

Tarkio tracts	\$2,529,500
Freezeout Gulch	\$5,000
<u>Cyr Bridge</u>	<u>\$11,000</u>
Total Valuation	\$2,545,500

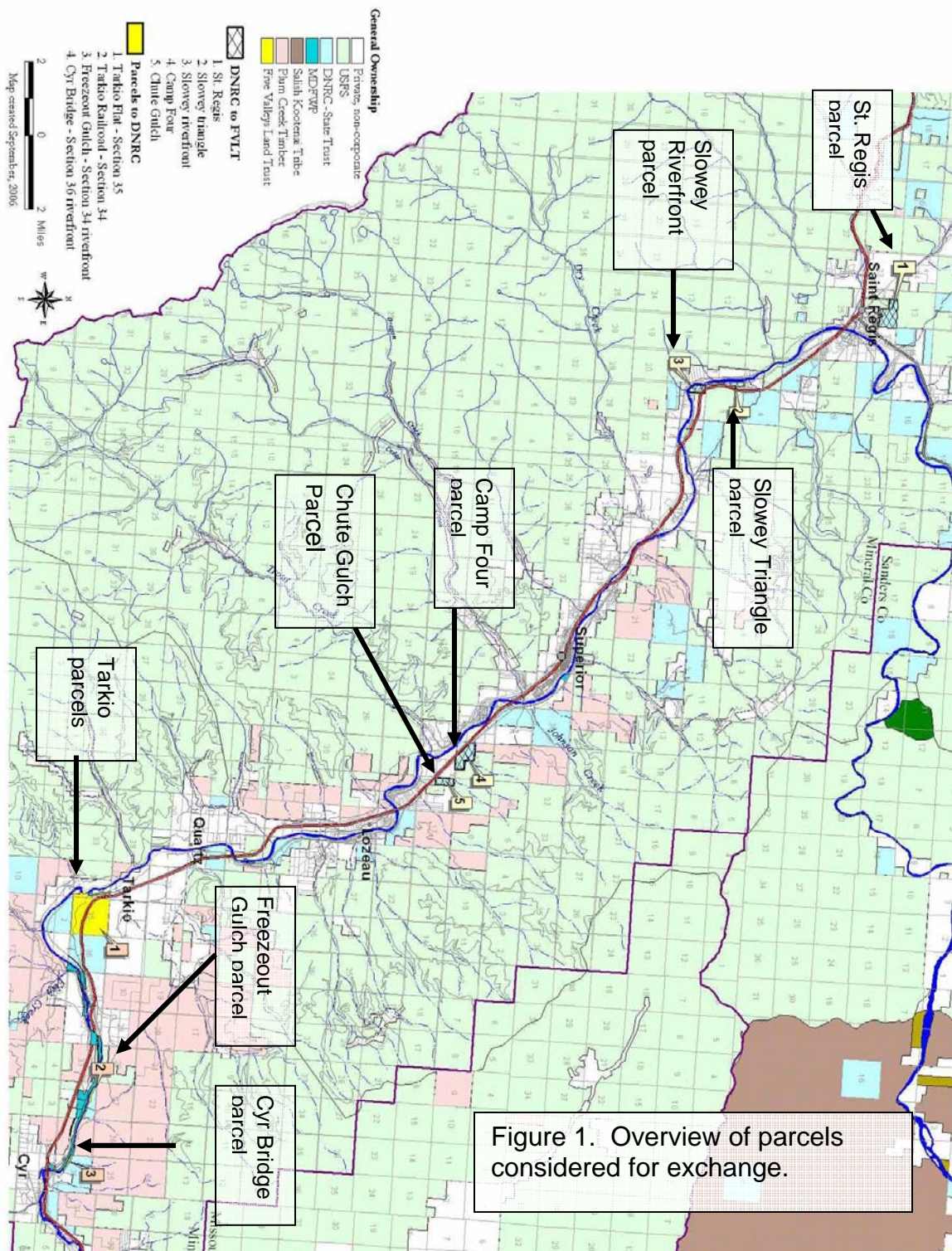


Figure 1. Overview of parcels considered for exchange.



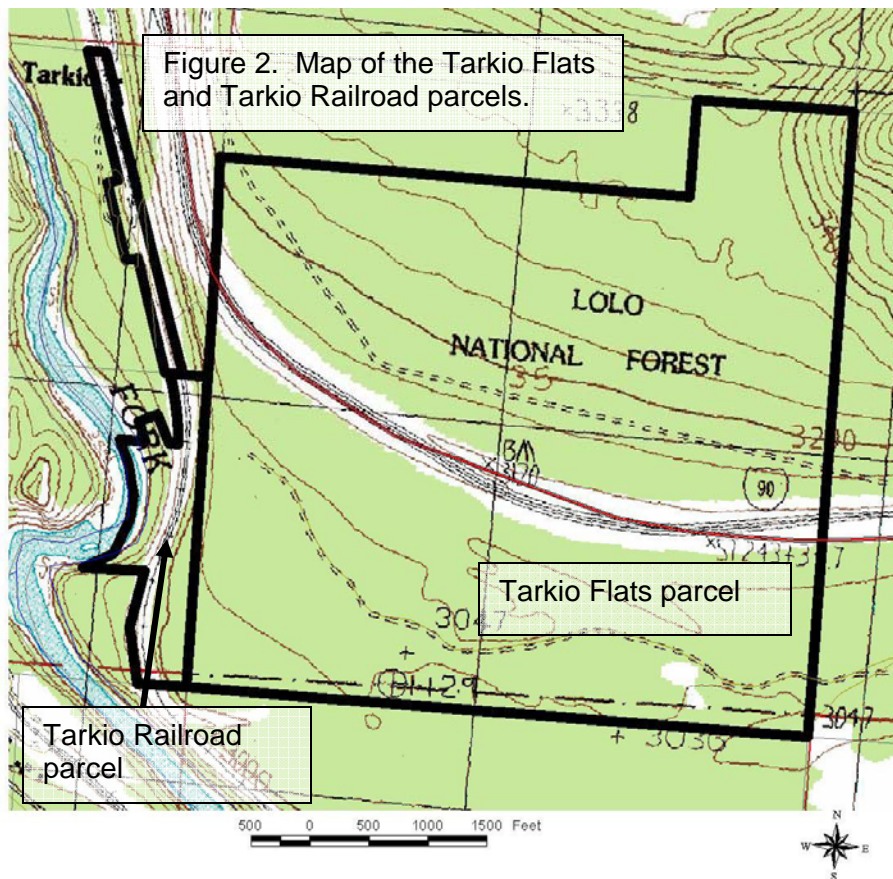
## E. Description of Parcels Proposed for Exchange

For purposes of this analysis, each parcel considered for exchange is described in terms of its environmental attributes, physical and cultural resources, and history of and potential for public use. Each parcel is then evaluated to determine the effects upon those values and criteria should the parcel be included in the final exchange package.

### 1. FVLT to DNRC

581.80 acres

#### Tarkio Flat-530 acres



This parcel is located southeast of the Tarkio I-90 interchange, and I-90 passes through the middle of the parcel (see Figures 1 and 2). The section is a low elevation, dry, ponderosa pine bench land, with elevations ranging from 3,047ft to 3,600 ft. It contains approximately 3.2 MMBF on the southern half of the section, and 1.0 MMBF of standing, merchantable timber on the northern half, based on the timber cruise completed by the Lolo NF, 1999. There are four outstanding rights on the parcel, none of which would be affected by the proposed exchange. There are no residences on the parcel, but the parcel would be attractive to residential developers due to the amount of level ground (see Figure 3). The southern half of the parcel is heavily timbered, and generally level or gently sloped (see Figure 4).



The northern half of the section is heavily used by 60-100 elk in late winter and spring, due to dense hiding and thermal cover and its proximity to foraging areas. There are no riparian or wetland habitats on the parcel. It is likely that wolves will soon spread to this area, if they are not already there. The tract does not border any lake or stream and there are no bodies of water within this parcel. A portion of the northern half of the parcel was burned by the I-90 Complex fire in 2005 and FVLT ordered a timber salvage to be conducted. Many snags were purposely left uncut to provide wildlife habitat (see figure 5) and wildlife use of the burned area is expected to continue to be high, especially due to its proximity to unburned areas, both within and outside the Tarkio Flat parcel.

There has been historic recreational use of the parcel by local residents, especially hiking, hunting, and horseback riding. The Old Mullan Road passes through the northern half of the parcel (see Figure 6).

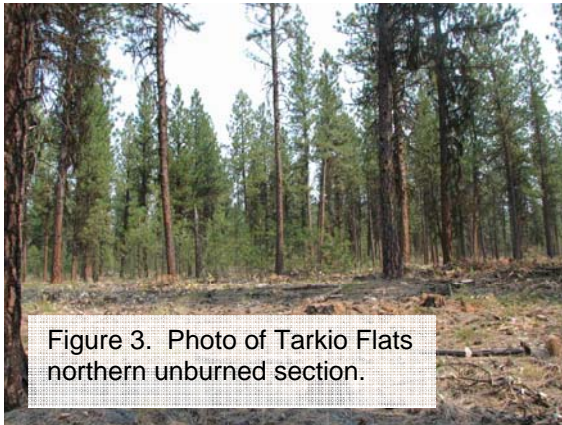


Figure 3. Photo of Tarkio Flats northern unburned section.



Figure 4. Photo of Tarkio Flats southern section. Pictured is an access road to adjacent DNRC lands.



Figure 5. Photo showing burned section of Tarkio Flats parcel after timber salvage.



Figure 6. Photo of Old Mullan Road on northern section of Tarkio Flats parcel.

## **Tarkio Railroad—34.40 acres**

The Tarkio Railroad property is accessible from the I-90 Tarkio interchange, and then south approximately ¼ mile on a gravel road on the Railroad ROW (see Figures 1 and 2). The majority of the property is steeply sloped, facing generally west. Average elevation of the property is approximately 2920'. The parcel is composed mainly of the abandoned Milwaukee Railroad ROW, but also has limited forested areas and includes approximately 0.22 miles of steep high bank Clark Fork riverfront, and excellent views of the Clark Fork River and Alberton Gorge (see Figure 7). Direct access to the river is limited due to the steepness of the bank.

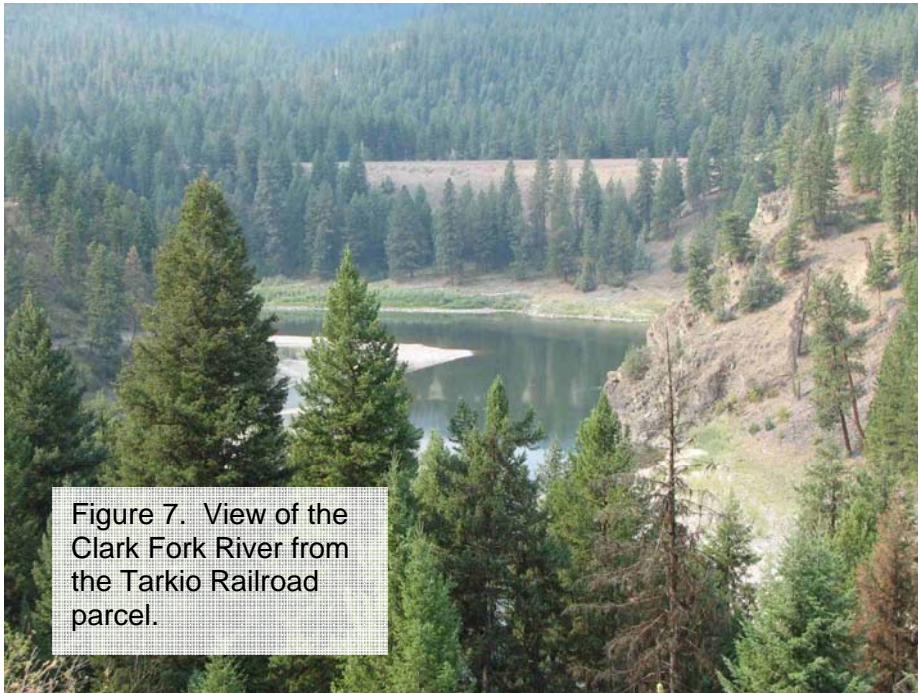


Figure 7. View of the Clark Fork River from the Tarkio Railroad parcel.

Much of the parcel's importance lies in the access that it provides to adjacent DNRC lands and the Tarkio Flats parcel. The parcel contains approximately 40 MBF of standing timber volume and a narrow riparian zone along the river. There are no other water bodies within the parcel, and the current owner holds no water rights within the parcel. A small portion of this parcel (1.86 acres) is subject to covenants allowing timber harvest only for purposes of insect and disease control.

White-tailed deer and songbirds regularly utilize the riparian zone along the river; the rest of the parcel is used occasionally by deer and other birds and mammals. There are no threatened or endangered species known to inhabit or utilize the parcel, however it does contain potential habitat for eagles and osprey.



## Freezeout Gulch-11.02 acres

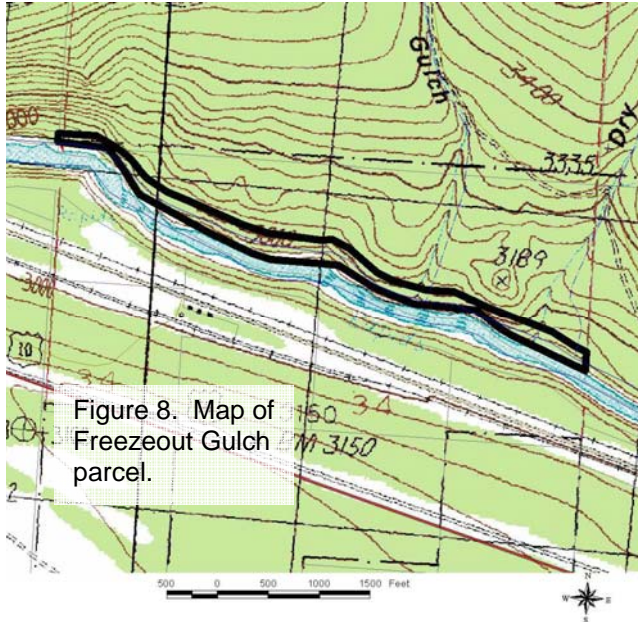


Figure 8. Map of Freezeout Gulch parcel.

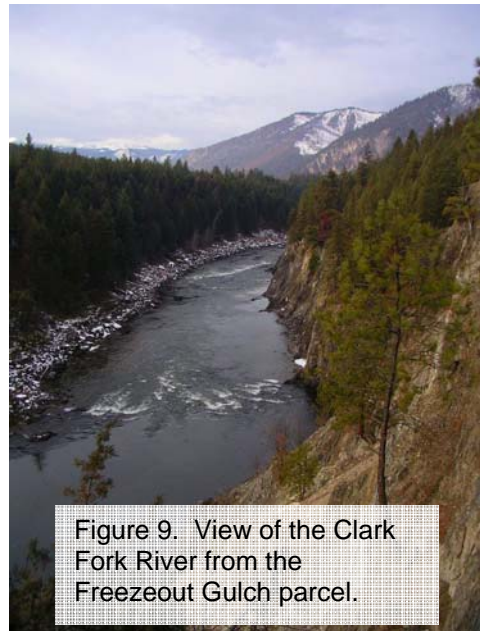


Figure 9. View of the Clark Fork River from the Freezeout Gulch parcel.

This parcel is located 7 miles west (downstream) of Alberton, MT and includes about 1.1 miles of steep high bank Clark Fork riverfront (Figures 9 and 10). Direct access to the river is limited due to the steepness of the riverbank, but the parcel does contain some level ground that would be suitable for a couple of home sites (Figure 11).

The parcel is thinly timbered and a small intermittent stream (Freezeout Gulch) flows through the parcel for approximately 200 ft. The stream does not support any fish and the current landowner holds no water rights to the stream. Wildlife use is limited due to the steepness of the bank. The acquisition of this parcel by DNRC would consolidate it with 119 acres of adjacent School Trust lands and protect the Alberton Gorge viewshed. It would provide direct public access from the Clark Fork River to the School Trust lands and it would eliminate slightly over two miles of property boundary and related considerations.

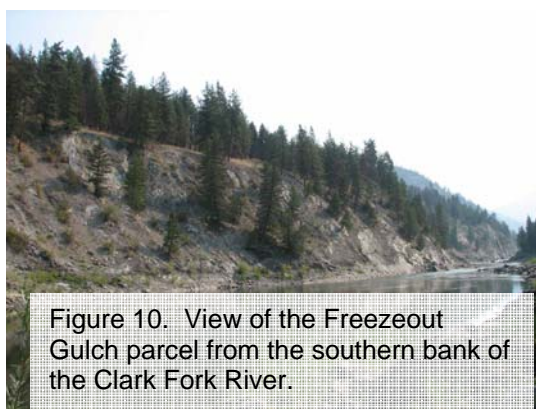


Figure 10. View of the Freezeout Gulch parcel from the southern bank of the Clark Fork River.

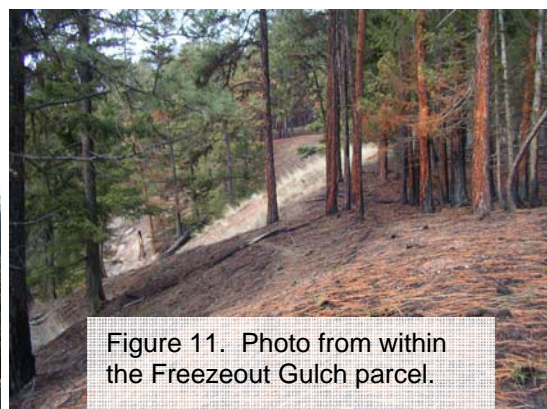


Figure 11. Photo from within the Freezeout Gulch parcel.

### **Cyr Bridge—6.38 acres**

This parcel is located approximately 5 miles west of Alberton, MT and includes 0.35 miles of steep high bank river frontage on the north bank of the Clark Fork River (see Figures 12-13) and a small level area (see Figure 14).

A small unnamed intermittent stream flows through the parcel for approximately 100 ft. The stream does not support any fish and is not covered by any water rights. The parcel is thinly timbered and would not provide timber income for the next 20 years. The acquisition of this parcel by DNRC would consolidate it with 451 acres of adjacent School Trust lands and protect the Alberton Gorge view shed. The acquisition would also provide direct public access to the School Trust lands from the Clark Fork River and it would eliminate slightly more than 0.7 miles of property boundary and related considerations.

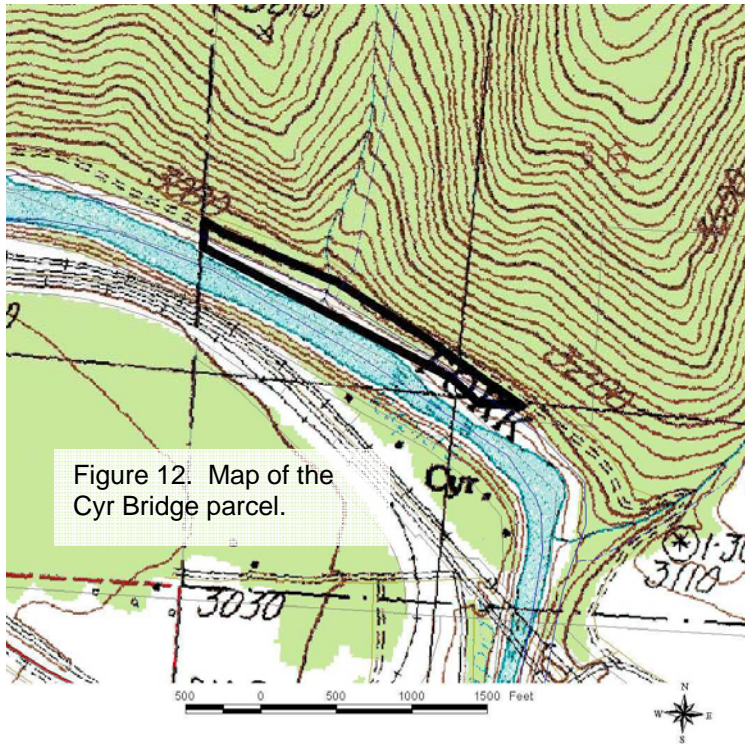






Figure 13. Cyr Bridge parcel and private easement road.



Figure 14. Cyr Bridge parcel

2. DNRC to FVLT

504.46 acres

### St Regis –200 acres

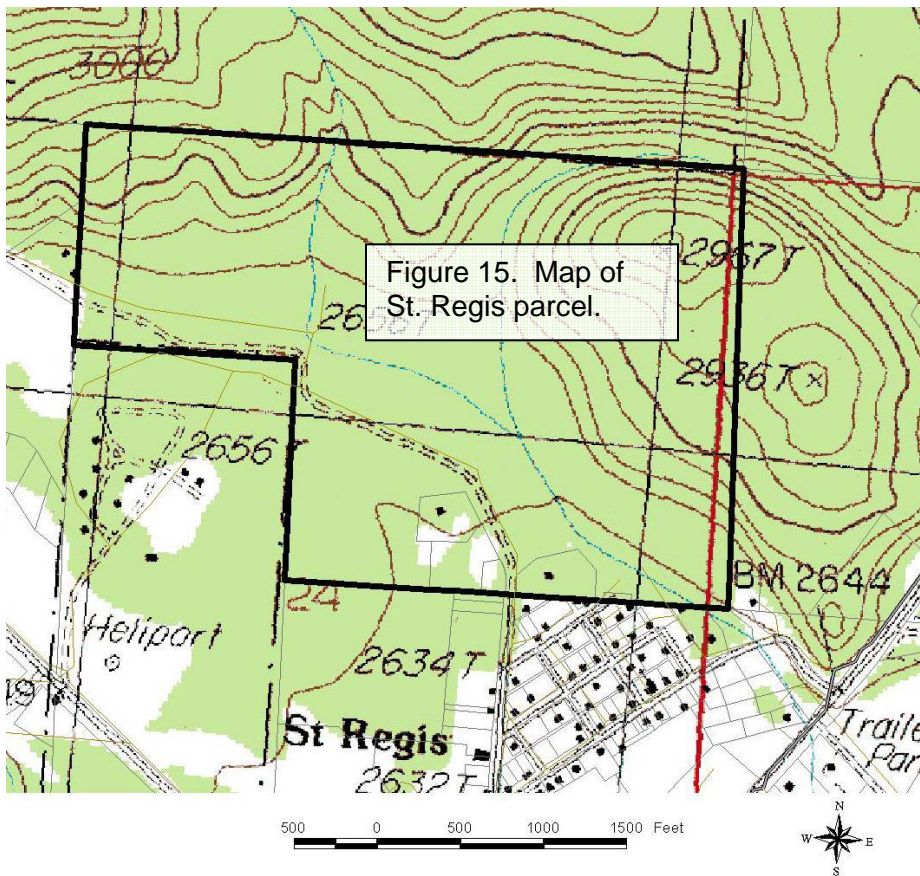


Figure 15. Map of St. Regis parcel.

This parcel is located immediately adjacent to and north of the community of St. Regis (see Figure 15). It is comprised of approximately 200 acres of second growth pine timberland, recently harvested. In 20 years DNRC would likely harvest approximately 400 MBF of additional timber volume. Approximately half of this parcel is level and developable, with St. Regis sewer available at the immediate southeast corner of the property. The remainder consists of SE facing

hillsides of variable slope (20-50%) and variable development potential (see Figure 16).

There are five leased parcels on the property, four of which are cabin site leases. Three of those have existing residences and one currently contains an uninhabited mobile home (see Figures 17 & 18). The fifth lease is for a small well and waterline easement serving adjacent private property. The residential lessees have all indicated that they want to purchase fee title to their leased lands when the exchange is completed. The parcel is not under lease for grazing purposes.

Primary wildlife use is white-tailed deer winter range, with occasional use by elk and moose. There are no threatened or endangered species known to inhabit or utilize the parcel. There are no riparian or wetland habitats on the parcel. The tract does not border any lake or stream and there are no bodies of water within this parcel. The parcel is not adjacent to any other DNRC lands.

The parcel receives some recreational use by off road vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians. It is directly accessed by public road easement and from adjacent private residential properties. This parcel is crossed by an extension of St. Regis Street that becomes a Mineral County road at the boundary of the property. The United States government holds a road easement to access adjacent lands used as a USFS work center.



Figure 16. St. Regis parcel (unleased portion).



Figure 17. Cabin site lease on St. Regis parcel.





Figure 18. Cabin site lease on St. Regis parcel.

### Slowey Triangle –42.46 acres

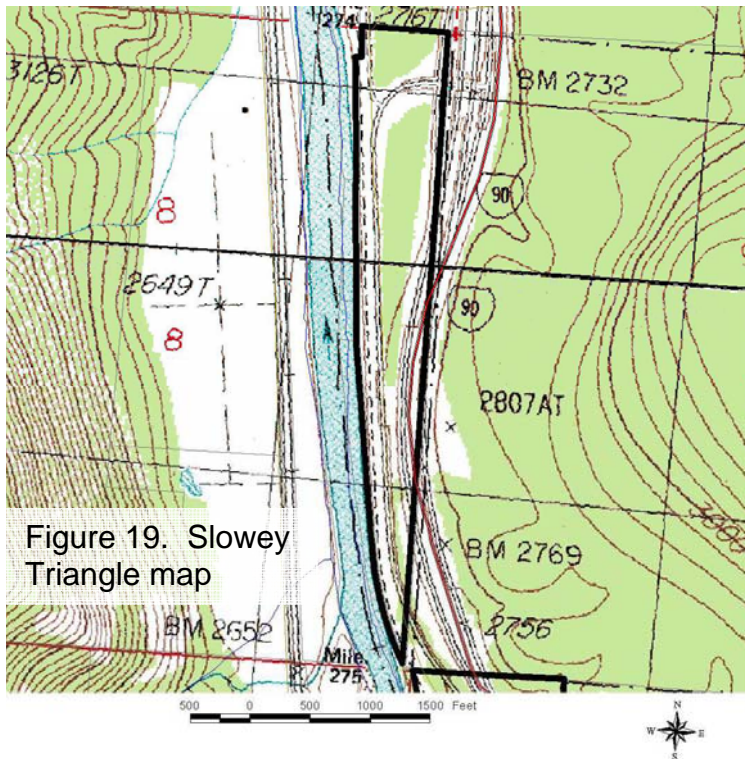


Figure 19. Slowey Triangle map

This parcel is located immediately adjacent to and west of the Slowey interchange on I-90, and bounded by I-90 to the east and old U.S. Highway 10, now a frontage road to the west (see Figure 19). The parcel is divided by the interchange access road, with approximately 2.5 acres on the north side of the access road and 4 acres on the south side that are suitable for residential

development and unencumbered by a DOT easement for I-90 ROW. This parcel is suitable for minor timber management, with an estimate 10 MBF suitable for harvest within 20 years, leaving an additional 20 MBF for future harvest. This parcel is not under lease for grazing purposes.

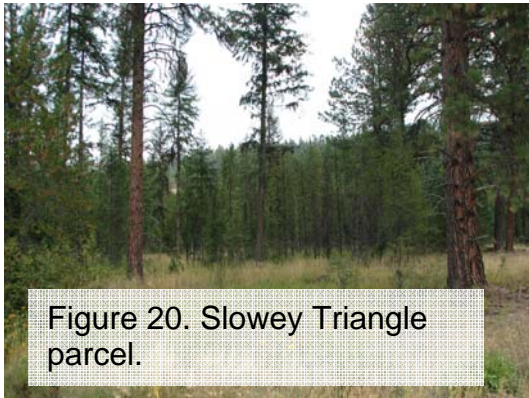


Figure 20. Slowey Triangle parcel.



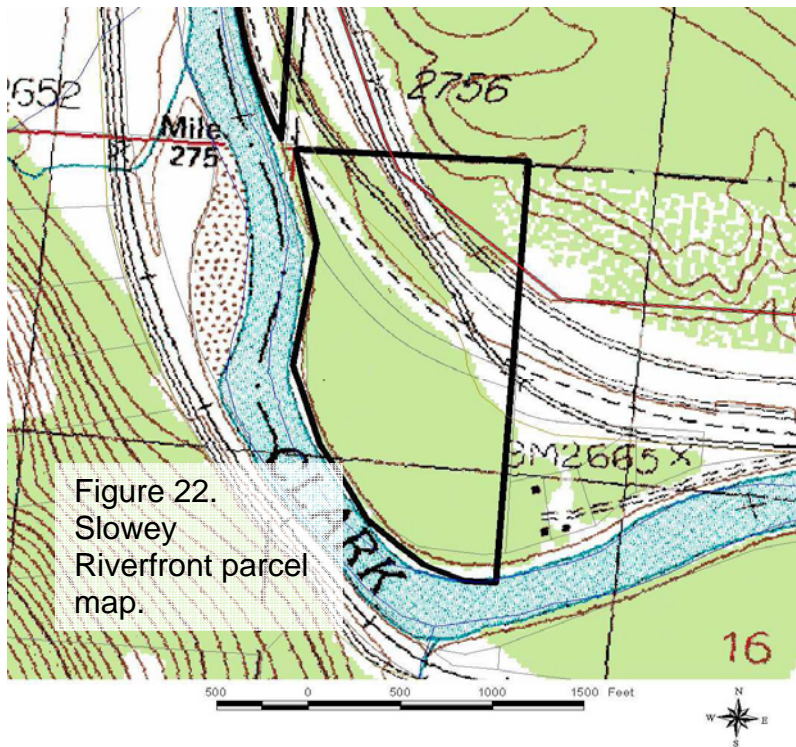
Figure 21. Slowey Triangle parcel.

Wildlife use is limited due to the proximity of the I-90 interchange and limited habitat, but some minimal use by white-tailed deer and elk does occur. The parcel is included in a larger area identified as a wildlife travel corridor by the Mineral County Wildlife Movement Areas Working Group. There are no threatened or endangered species known to inhabit or utilize the parcel, however there is potential habitat for eagles and osprey. There are no riparian or wetland habitats on the parcel. The tract does not border any lake or stream and there are no bodies of water within this parcel. The parcel is not adjacent to other DNRC lands.

The parcel has little public recreational value except for occasional pedestrian use. It is accessed from all sides by public roadways. Adjacent private lands are in use as rural residential properties. The railroad grade of the Old Milwaukee Railroad passes through a portion of the Slowey Triangle parcel.



## Slowey Riverfront – 53.41 acres



This parcel includes approximately 27.4 usable acres, with 18 acres encumbered by a recreational use easement held by MFWP. The parcel is bounded by .6 miles of low bank riverfront on the Clark Fork River (see Figure 23), private residential development to the east and west and the I-90 corridor on the north, with a small, isolated portion of the parcel located just to the north of the I-90 corridor. The parcel consists of mixed second growth forest with a potential for approximately 50MBF of additional timber harvest within 20 years. Patented railroad ROW divides the property and limits practical access for development. Pedestrian access to the recreational use easement is inconvenient but feasible. The parcel is suitable for residential development, if practical access can be secured. There is no grazing lease in place on this property.

Due to access constraints, the parcel is of limited use to deer and elk, although nesting birds and other small animals do make use of the parcel. The parcel has been excluded from the designated wildlife travel corridor by the Mineral County Wildlife Areas Working Group. There are no threatened or endangered species known to inhabit or utilize the parcel, however it does contain potential habitat for eagles and osprey.

Legal access is possible on foot, but public recreational use is minimal due to the lack of vehicular access. The public can access the parcel from the Clark Fork River. The MFWP recreational use easement has not been actively utilized due to access constraints and nearby public access and use areas on USFS lands (Slowey Campground). MFWP does not anticipate any recreational facilities or development on the parcel. The parcel is not adjacent to other DNRC lands.



Figure 23. Slowey Riverfront parcel stream bank.

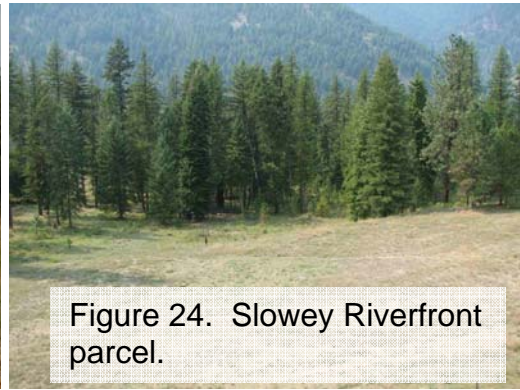


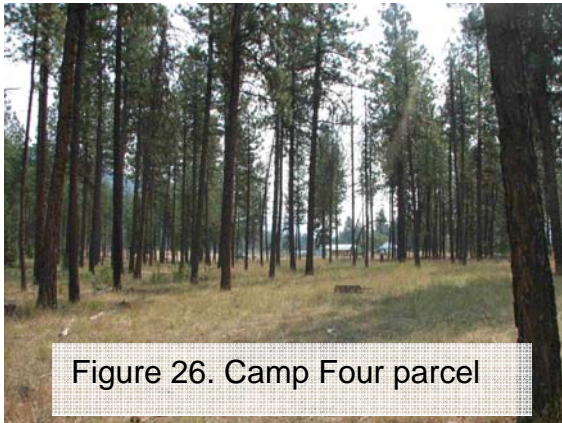
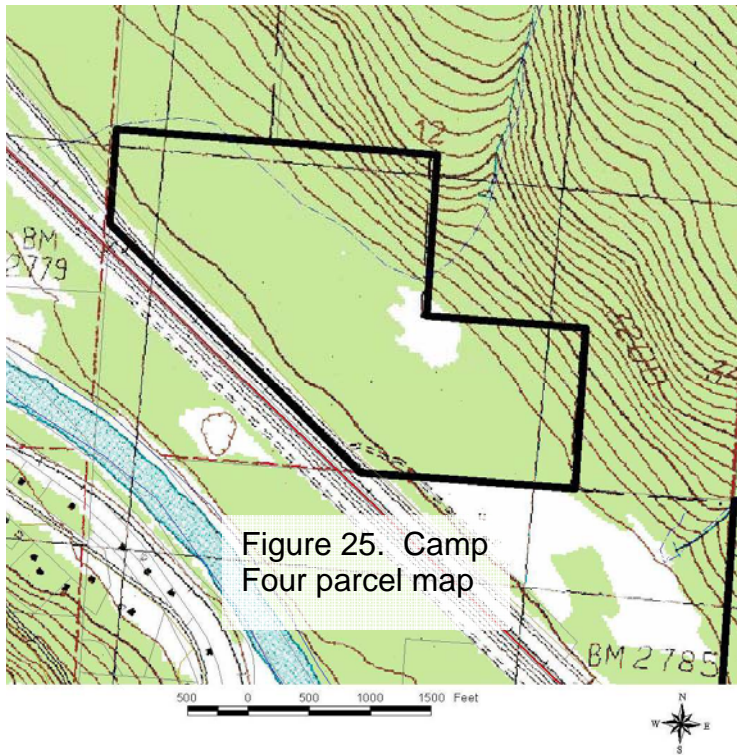
Figure 24. Slowey Riverfront parcel.

### **Camp Four –145.78 acres**

This parcel lies entirely north of and adjacent to old U.S. Highway 10 and the I-90 corridor, including approximately 120 acres of level land and 24 acres of steep, forested hillside. The timber is predominantly second growth ponderosa pine, with a potential for a harvest of approximately 390 MBF over the next 20 years. A grazing lease is in place on the property, with a current carrying capacity of 21 AUMs/year on that portion north of I-90.

The parcel provides important wintering and travel habitat for elk and white-tailed deer. There are no threatened or endangered species known to inhabit or utilize the parcel, but it is potential habitat for wolves, which are rapidly colonizing many parts of western Montana. The parcel has not been identified as a designated wildlife travel corridor by the Mineral County Wildlife Areas Working Group. The parcel does not border any lake or stream. There is a small spring and associated wetland habitat on the property that could be affected by the change in ownership and management of the parcel. Inclusion of this parcel in the trade could have an adverse impact upon deer and elk that use this property because of the likelihood of residential development.





The property is easily accessible to the public from old US 10 and provides access to adjacent USFS lands that are used primarily for hunting. The parcel is isolated and not adjacent to any other DNRC lands. The old Mullan Road passes through the parcel (see Figure 27), and the remains of an old lumber camp can be found here also.

## Chute Gulch –62.81 acres

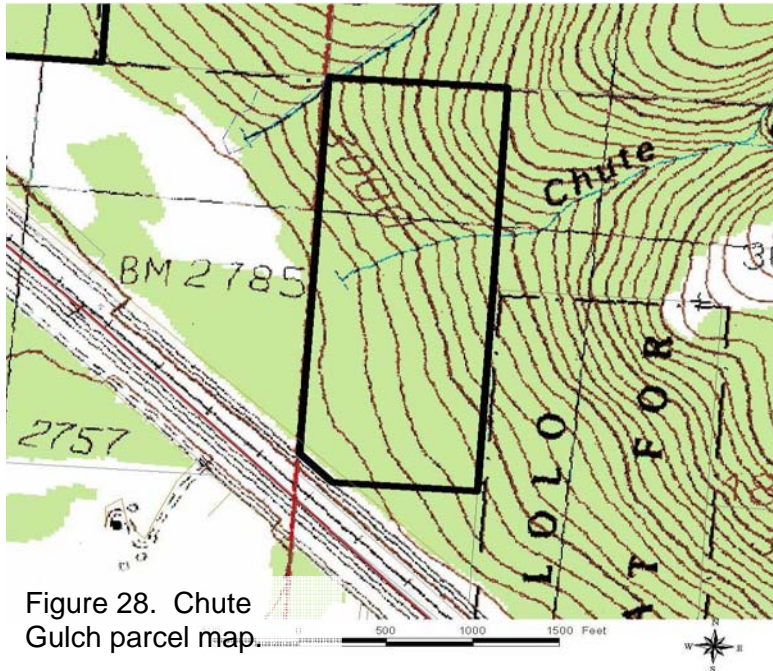


Figure 28. Chute Gulch parcel map.

This parcel lies entirely north of and adjacent to old U.S. Highway 10 and the I-90 corridor and includes approximately 40 acres of gently to moderately sloping mixed forest land and 22 acres of steeply sloped forest land. The timber is predominantly second growth ponderosa pine with a potential for approximately 90 MBF of harvest over the next 20 years. A grazing lease is in place on the property, with a current carrying capacity of 9 AUMs/year.

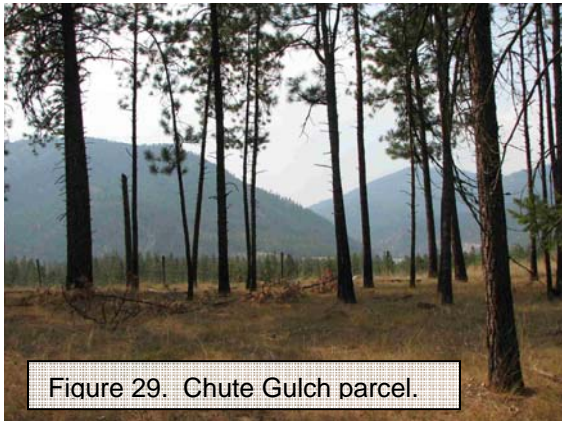


Figure 29. Chute Gulch parcel.

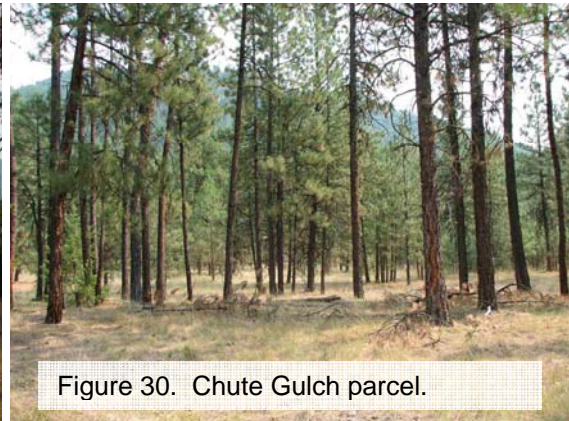


Figure 30. Chute Gulch parcel.

The parcel provides important wintering and travel habitat for elk and white-tailed deer. There are no threatened or endangered species known to inhabit or utilize the parcel, but it is possible that wolf packs in the DeBorgia and Superior areas have traveled through the parcel. The parcel has not been identified as a designated wildlife travel corridor by the Mineral County Wildlife Areas Working Group. The parcel does not border any lake or stream. Inclusion of this parcel in the trade could have an adverse impact upon deer and elk that use this property because of the likelihood of residential development.



The property is easily accessible to the public from old US 10 and provides access to adjacent USFS lands that are used primarily for hunting. The parcel is isolated and not adjacent to any other DNRC lands. The old Mullan Road also passes through this parcel.

## **II. ALTERNATIVES and ISSUES**

This EA evaluates two alternatives in detail: Alternative A (the No Action Alternative), and Alternative B (the Action Alternative).

### **A. No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, the land exchange would not proceed and State Trust Lands would continue to be managed by DNRC according to applicable statutory mandates. FVLT would own, manage and dispose of the lands it is offering for exchange as determined by the organization's Board of Directors.

Issues that have been identified relating to the No Action Alternative include:

- The loss of public access to lands being offered for exchange by FVLT.
- The potential residential development of lands being offered for exchange by FVLT.
- The continued ownership and management of scattered, fragmented and unconsolidated lands by DNRC that possess limited potential for revenue generation and provide problematic access for on-the-ground management activities and are of limited public recreational value.
- The failure to create private residential development opportunities for the benefit of Mineral County taxable valuation and economic vitality, including the opportunity for Statecabin site leaseholders in the St. Regis area to purchase their leased sites.

## 1. DNRC LANDS

### **St. Regis Parcel**

#### Management

Under the No Action Alternative, the 200 acres of the St. Regis parcel would remain as State Trust Land. Management activities typical for State Trust Lands would continue. This parcel is not adjacent to other DNRC lands. Adjacent private land influences management.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC would continue managing the parcel for timber production to generate income for the School Trust. As there have been two harvests on this parcel in the last 20 years, stands are young and is estimated that the parcel would provide only \$110,000 to the Trust in 20 years from timber sales of 400 MBF. Even after this harvest, there would remain an average of 3MBF per acre of merchantable timber on the parcel. There are no current grazing leases on the St. Regis parcel. Adjacent private land and existing cabin sites influence management.

#### Cabin Site Leases

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC would continue to lease the four existing cabin sites and one small well site on the parcel. The five sites currently provide a total of \$4,155.92 in annual income to the Trust and would provide \$83,118.40 to the Trust over 20 years.

#### Public Access

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would continue to be open to public access. The parcel currently receives low levels of use by ATV users, bicyclists, and pedestrians. It is directly accessed by public road easement and from adjacent private residential properties. This parcel is crossed by an extension of St. Regis Street that becomes a Mineral County road at the boundary of the property. The United States government holds a road easement to access adjacent lands used as a USFS work center.

#### Potential for Development

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would remain as State Trust Land. The residential lessees who currently lease parcels on the property may not have the option of purchasing fee title to the land. The parcel is adjacent to municipal services and there is low/moderate potential for additional lease development over the next 20 years.

### **Slowey Triangle Parcel**

#### Management

Under the No Action Alternative, the 42.46 acres of the Slowey Triangle parcel would remain as Trust Land. Management activities typical for State Trust Lands would continue. This parcel is small and configured in a narrow triangular shape which limits effective management of the parcel.

### Grazing

There are no current grazing leases on the Slowey Triangle parcel.

### Timber

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC would continue managing the parcel for timber production to generate income for the State School Trust. A harvest within 20 years would yield 10 MBF and \$2,750 in income to the Trust and leave a standing volume of approximately 2MBF per acre of merchantable timber after harvest.

### Public Access

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would continue to be open to public access. However, the parcel has little public recreational value except for occasional pedestrian use. It is accessed from all sides by public roadways.

### Potential for Development

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would remain as State Trust Land and would not be a high priority for development. DNRC would entertain proposals for development for commercial use of the interchange area.

## **Slowey Riverfront**

### Management

Under the No Action Alternative, the 53.41 acres of the Slowey Riverfront parcel would remain as State Trust Land and would continue to be managed as such. This parcel is physically isolated from motorized access which limits effective management of the parcel.

### Grazing

There are no current grazing leases on the Slowey Riverfront parcel.

### Timber

The parcel consists of mixed second growth forest with a potential for approximately \$13,750 in income to the Trust from harvest within 20 years, leaving an average of 5 MBF/acre of merchantable timber after harvest, provided access could be secured from adjacent landowners.

### Public Access

Access to most of this parcel is limited due to surrounding private land. Legal access is possible on foot, but public use is minimal due to the lack of vehicular access. The public can access the parcel from the Clark Fork River. The MFWP recreational easement has not been utilized due to access constraints and nearby public use areas on USFS lands (Slowey Campground). MFWP does not anticipate any recreational facilities or development on the parcel.

#### Potential for Development

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would remain as State Trust Land and would be a low priority for development.

#### **Camp Four** Management

Under the No Action Alternative, the 145.78 acres of the Camp Four parcel would remain as State Trust Land and would continue to be managed as such. The parcel is isolated from other State Trust Lands but the large size of the parcel and easy access enhances management options. A Montana Department of Transportation gravel pit easement on an adjacent portion of the parcel south of I-90 limited management options and development potential for that portion, resulting in its removal from consideration.

#### Timber and Grazing

The parcel consists of mixed second growth forest with a potential for approximately \$107,250 in income to the Trust from timber harvest of 390 MBF in the next 20 years, leaving an average of approximately 5 MBF/acre of merchantable timber standing after harvest. A current grazing lease exists on this parcel, which would generate \$3,314 in income to the Trust over the next 20 years.

#### Public Access

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would continue to be open to public access and recreation. There is easy public access to the northern portion of the parcel from the frontage road, and recreationists often pass through the parcel to access National Forest lands

#### Potential for Development

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would remain as State Trust Land and would be a low priority for residential development. The parcel is not adjacent to municipal services.

#### **Chute Gulch** Management

Under the No Action Alternative, the 62.81 acres of the Chute Gulch parcel would remain as State Trust Land and would continue to be managed as such. The parcel is isolated from other State Trust Lands but the I-90 frontage road provides convenient access for management.

#### Timber and Grazing

The parcel is thinly forested, which would provide the Trust with \$24,750 in income in 20 years from the harvest of 90 MBF, leaving an average of approximately 6 MBF/acre of merchantable timber standing after harvest. A grazing lease on the parcel would generate \$1,420 in income to the Trust over the next 20 years.

### Public Access

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would continue to be open to public access and recreation. There is easy public access to the parcel from the frontage road. However, since the parcel is small, care must be exercised to avoid trespass onto adjacent private lands.

### Potential for Development

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would remain as State Trust Land and would be a low priority for development. The parcel is not adjacent to municipal services.

## 2. LANDS NOW OWNED BY FVLT

### **Tarkio Flat**

#### Management

Under the No Action Alternative, the Tarkio Flat parcel would be offered for sale by FVLT and could be developed into rural residences.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would be in private ownership and the State would not receive any income from these activities on the parcel.

#### Public Access

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and public recreation and access would be at the owner's discretion. It is likely that the entire parcel would be closed to public access, thereby also restricting access to 885 acres of adjacent State lands, although those State lands could still be accessed from the east. Area landowners have historically used this parcel for recreation and access and are very concerned about the potential loss of this privilege.

#### Potential for Development

A coarse filter analysis indicated good development potential for this parcel. There is good access, the ground is level or gently sloped over much of the parcel, and numerous types of recreation are possible in the area. Some portions of the parcel were burned in a forest fire in 2005 which reduced the aesthetics of the parcel and might deter some potential buyers, but it is unlikely that the development potential has been significantly affected.

One factor affecting potential development of this piece is that when River Network acquired this and the Tarkio Railroad parcel from the Forest Service in the Alberton Gorge Land Exchange, they agreed to two mitigation measures to the Tarkio tracts. The first measure was that they would pursue a subsequent land exchange with the DNRC which would transfer the Tarkio tracts to that State agency, which is now occurring and this EA addresses. The second mitigation

measure was that in the eventuality that the DNRC exchange failed, River Network (now FVLT) would require deed restrictions on the parcels that would limit the use of the parcel north of I-90 to timber management, and would stipulate that home sites on the remainder be a minimum of 40 acres in size.

### **Tarkio Railroad**

#### Management

Under the No Action Alternative, the Tarkio Railroad parcel would be offered for sale by FVLT.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would be in private ownership and the State would not receive any income from these activities on the parcel.

#### Public Access

The greatest value of this parcel is the access it affords to nearby DNRC lands through the Tarkio Flat parcel. Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and public recreation and access would be at the owner's discretion. It is likely that the entire parcel would be closed to public access, thereby also shutting off this access to 485 acres of adjacent State lands. Area landowners have historically used the Tarkio Railroad parcel and adjacent lands for recreation and are very concerned about the potential loss of access to these parcels.

#### Potential for Development

This parcel has limited potential for rural residential or recreational development due to restrictive covenants on a portion of the tract and steep slopes on other portions. However, some potential rural home sites do exist, and would likely be highly sought-after because of the views of the Clark Fork River. Please see above discussion concerning deed restrictions on the Tarkio Flats parcel.

### **Freezeout Gulch**

#### Management

Under the No Action Alternative, the Freezeout Gulch parcel would be offered for sale by FVLT and probably bought by a single buyer.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would be in private ownership and the State would not receive any income from these activities on the parcel. Small size and steep terrain would preclude viable, efficient resource management.

#### Public Access

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and public recreation and access would be at the owner's discretion. It is likely that the parcel above the high water mark would be closed to public access. This parcel does not currently receive much public recreation due to its steep slopes, but it



does provide access to 119 acres of adjacent State lands. The parcel is also part of the viewshed for the Alberton Gorge and therefore has high aesthetic value for the public. If a private home or homes were built on the parcel, it would negatively affect the view for boaters on the Clark Fork River and detract from the floating experience. Rafting the Alberton Gorge is a major tourism draw for the area and provides income for many local businesses.

#### Potential for Development

Under the No Action Alternative, this parcel would be offered for sale and potentially developed. The majority of the parcel is unsuitable for development because of steep slopes, but a couple of potential home or business sites do exist. The only current access to these sites would be directly from the Clark Fork River. If suitable access to these sites could be obtained, the demand for these sites could be high because of the unobstructed views of the Clark Fork River they would afford.

#### **Cyr Bridge** Management

Under the No Action Alternative, the Cyr Bridge parcel would be offered for sale by FVLT and probably bought by a single buyer.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would be in private ownership and the State would not receive any income from these activities on the parcel. Small size and steep terrain preclude efficient, viable resource management.

#### Public Access

Under the No Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and public recreation and access would be at the owner's discretion. It is likely that the parcel above the high water mark would be closed to public access. The small parcel itself does not currently receive much public recreation due to its steep slopes, but it does provide access to 451 acres of adjacent State lands. The parcel is also part of the viewshed for the Alberton Gorge and therefore has high aesthetic value for the public. If a private home or homes were built on the parcel, it would negatively affect the view for boaters on the Clark Fork River and detract from the floating experience. Rafting the Alberton Gorge is a major tourism draw for the area and provides income for many local businesses.

#### Potential for Development

Under the No Action Alternative, this parcel would be offered for sale and potentially developed. The majority of the parcel is unsuitable for development because of steep slopes, but it may afford a small area for possible residential or recreational development. The current access to this site is directly from the Clark Fork River. If suitable access could be obtained, the demand for this parcel could be high because of the unobstructed views of the Clark Fork River it would afford.

## **B. Proposed Action Alternative**

The proposed Action Alternative includes a package of parcels of State Trust Lands selected from all those under consideration that, when considered in their entirety, most closely approach the value of the lands offered for exchange by FVLT, without exceeding that value, and those most closely provide an equal amount of Clark Fork River frontage, without exceeding the amount offered for exchange by FVLT. In addition, the parcels have been considered for their appropriateness for inclusion in the exchange in view of DNRC exchange criteria, and other factors that apply in the public interest.

Issues that have been identified related to the Proposed Action Include:

- The opportunity to consolidate blocks of state-owned lands for the improvement of management efficiency. The reduction of property boundaries overall also makes it easier for the public to stay within public boundaries when recreating, thus reducing unintentional trespass.
- Removal of in-holdings such as Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge.
- The opportunity to transfer into private ownership state-owned lands with difficult access and/or limited management or income generation opportunities.
- The continuation of public access opportunities to lands with a history of public recreational usage.
- The protection of important wildlife values.
- The residential development of currently state-owned parcels transferring into private ownership.
- The importance of securing an equal or greater amount of stream frontage in exchange for stream frontage transferred into private ownership.
- The assurance that land received in exchange possesses potential for equal or greater income to the School Trust than that of lands transferred into private ownership.
- Mineral County's concern that opportunities for residential development will be available on lands included in the exchange, in the interest of enhancing the taxable valuation for the County.
- The need to identify and protect important conservation values on lands that would be traded to FVLT.

## 1. LANDS OFFERED BY DNRC

### **St. Regis**

#### Management

Under the Action Alternative, the 200 acres of the St. Regis parcel would be exchanged with FVLT, who would subsequently offer the parcel for sale to private buyers.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and the State would not receive any income from these activities on the parcel. Uses would likely change from resource based to a mix of resource and residential based.

#### Cabin Site Leases

The residential lessees who currently lease parcels on the property would have the option of purchasing fee title to the land. All of the lessees have expressed their intention to do so.

#### Public Access

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and public recreation and access would be at the owner's discretion. It is likely that all of the parcel would be closed to public recreation and access after purchase. However, the St. Regis parcel does not control access to adjacent public lands.

#### Potential for Development

Five acres of this parcel is under easement to USDA. Approximately 100 acres of this parcel is flat to gently sloping land immediately adjacent to the town of St. Regis, and has high potential for residential development. The remaining acreage is moderately sloping (20-50%) forested hillsides, with good potential for development.

### **Slowey Triangle Parcel**

#### Management

Under the Action Alternative, the 42.46 acres of the Slowey Triangle parcel would be exchanged with FVLT, who would subsequently offer the parcel for sale to private buyers.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and the State would not receive any income from these activities on the parcel.

#### Public Access

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and public recreation and access would be at the owner's discretion. It is likely that all of the parcel would be closed to public recreation and access after purchase.

However, the Slowey Triangle parcel has little public recreational value except for occasional pedestrian use.

#### Potential for Development

Adjacent private lands are currently being used as rural residential property, and this parcel has a high potential for similar residential development. Since the site is located at an interstate interchange, there may also be potential for commercial development.

### **Slowey Riverfront**

#### Management

Under the Action Alternative, the 53.41 acres of the Slowey Riverfront parcel would be exchanged with FVLT, who would subsequently offer the parcel for sale to private buyers.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and the State would not receive any income from these activities on the parcel.

#### Public Access

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and public recreation and access would be at the owner's discretion. Public access to this parcel is currently limited due to surrounding private land and pedestrian access to the recreational use easement would no longer be feasible. FVLT would negotiate with MFWP regarding disposition of the recreational use easement and securing additional recreational access easements or fee lands in Mineral County. It is likely that all of the parcel above the high water mark would be closed to public recreation and access after purchase. The public can access the parcel from the Clark Fork River, but rarely venture beyond the low river bank. The public would still have legal right to use the area below the high water mark in accordance with Montana's Stream Access Law.

#### Potential for Development

This parcel has a high potential for development due to its low bank river access and gently sloping aspect, if access can be obtained and the MFWP recreational use easement removed.

### **Camp Four**

#### Management

Under the Action Alternative, the 145.78 acres of the Camp Four parcel would be exchanged with FVLT, who would subsequently offer the parcel for sale to private buyers.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and the State would not receive any income from these activities on the parcel.

#### Public Access

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and public recreation and access would be at the owner's discretion. It is likely that all of the parcel would be closed to public recreation and access after purchase. However, FVLT would require the inclusion of a recreation trail easement as a provision of any sale to ensure continued access to adjacent Federal Lands.

#### Potential for Development

This parcel has a high potential for development due to easy access and abundance of potential home sites. Adjacent private lands are currently being used as rural residential property.

#### **Chute Gulch**

##### Management

Under the Action Alternative, the 62.81 acres of the Chute Gulch parcel would be exchanged with FVLT, who would subsequently offer the parcel for sale to private buyers.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and the State would not receive any income from these activities on the parcel.

#### Public Access

Under the Action Alternative, the parcel would be privately owned and public recreation and access would be at the owner's discretion. It is likely that all of the parcel would be closed to public recreation and access after purchase.

#### Potential for Development

This parcel has a high potential for development due to easy access and an abundance of potential home sites. Adjacent private lands are currently being used as rural residential property.

## 2. LANDS OFFERED BY FVLT

#### **Tarkio Flat**

##### Management

Under the Action Alternative, the 530 acres of the Tarkio Flat would be exchanged with DNRC and become State Trust Land and managed as such. Acquiring this parcel would consolidate it and Tarkio Railroad with two existing State parcels that are currently in checkerboard ownership, making a contiguous block of 1763 acres.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the Action Alternative, it is estimated that the Tarkio Flat parcel would generate an income of \$550,000 for the School Trust from the harvest of 2

MMBF of timber in the next 20 years in timber sales. This would leave an average of 4 MBF/acre of merchantable timber standing after harvest. There is moderate to high potential for marketable gravel on the parcel.

#### Public Access

Under the Action Alternative, the Tarkio Flat parcel would remain open to public access and recreation as it has in the past. This parcel historically receives moderate to heavy recreational use, especially in the fall, and local residents have expressed sincere hopes that the parcel remains open to the public. This parcel, along with Tarkio Railroad (below), provides access to 885 acres of existing State Trust Land adjacent to this section.

#### Potential for Development

Adjacent private lands in this area are rural residential properties, and coarse filter analysis indicated good potential for development.

### **Tarkio Railroad**

#### Management

Under the Action Alternative, the 34 acres of the Tarkio Railroad parcel would be exchanged with DNRC and become part of the State's School Trust lands and managed as such. Acquiring this parcel will consolidate it and Tarkio Flat with two existing State parcels that are currently in checkerboard ownership, making a contiguous block of 1763 acres.

#### Timber and Grazing

Under the Action Alternative, it is estimated that the Tarkio Railroad parcel would generate an income of \$5,500 for the School Trust from the harvest of 20 MBF of timber over the next 20 years, and leave an average of 2 MBF/acre of merchantable timber standing after harvest. The tract has limited potential for timber production; its greatest value is in the access it affords to adjacent DNRC lands and the Tarkio Flat parcel.

#### Public Access

Under the Action Alternative, the Tarkio Railroad parcel would remain open to public access and recreation as it has in the past. This parcel, along with Tarkio Flat (above) controls access to 885 acres of existing State land adjacent to this section.

#### Potential for Development

There is limited potential for special uses and recreational development on this parcel consistent with deed restrictions. The railroad bed is also a roadway providing vehicular access for DNRC, recreationists, permittees, and lessees. There is future potential for easements on this roadway.

## **Freezeout Gulch**

### Management

Under the Action Alternative, the 11.02 acres of the Freezeout Gulch parcel would be exchanged with DNRC, becoming part of the School Trust lands network and managed as such. Acquiring this parcel will consolidate it with 119 acres of adjacent School Trust land and connect the river with land. The acquisition would also reduce a great deal of artificial property boundary and replace it with the natural boundary of the river. Natural boundaries are easier to identify and reduce incidents of unintentional trespass.

### Timber and Grazing

As this small parcel is mostly comprised of thinly forested steep slopes, it is estimated that the School Trust would not receive any income from this parcel in the next 20 years.

### Public Access

This parcel was originally sold by the State as a patented railroad ROW. This parcel now separates current DNRC land from the river. The acquisition of this parcel by DNRC would provide legal public access to 119 acres of land via the Clark Fork River, but the slopes are very steep and the public is unlikely to utilize the parcel as a point of access. However, there is public value in the protection of the Alberton Gorge viewshed, which this aspect of the exchange would help accomplish.

### Potential for Development

Under the Action Alternative, this parcel would not be privately developed.

## **Cyr Bridge**

### Management

Under the Action Alternative, the 6.38 acres of the Cyr Bridge parcel would be exchanged with DNRC, becoming part of the School Trust lands network and managed as such. Acquiring this parcel will consolidate it with 451 acres of adjacent School Trust land and connect the river with state land. The acquisition would also reduce a great deal of artificial property boundary and replace it with the natural boundary of the river. Natural boundaries are easier to identify and reduce incidents of unintentional trespass.

### Timber and Grazing

As this small parcel is mostly comprised of thinly forested steep slopes, it is estimated that the School Trust would not receive any income from this parcel in the next 20 years.

### Public Access

This parcel was originally sold by the State as a patented railroad ROW. This parcel now separates current DNRC land from the river. The acquisition of this parcel by DNRC would provide legal public access to 451 acres of State land via the Clark Fork River, but the slopes are very steep and the public is unlikely to utilize the

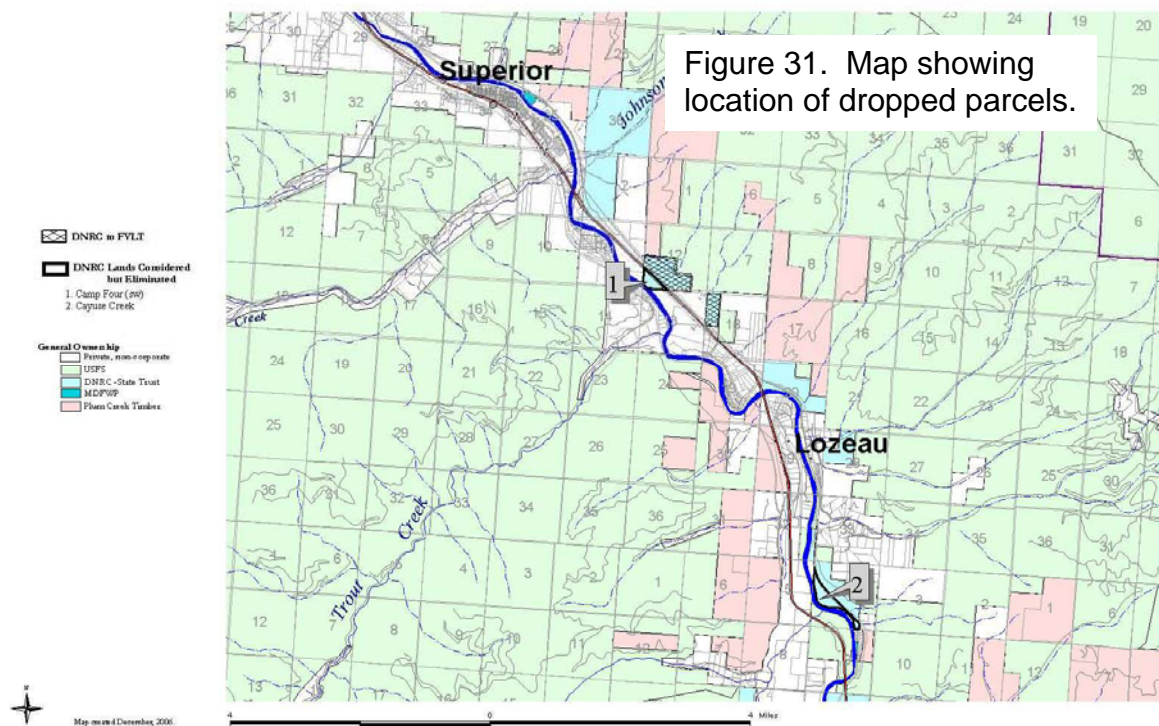
parcel as a point of access. However, there is public value in the protection of the Alberton Gorge viewshed, which this aspect of the exchange would help accomplish.

### Potential for Development

Under the Action Alternative, this parcel would not be privately developed.

## **C. Alternatives Considered but Dismissed:**

Prior to submission of the proposed land exchange to the Land Board for preliminary approval, a number of DNRC parcels were evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the land exchange based upon exchange criteria. At that time, upon recommendation of the DNRC staff and with the concurrence of FVLT, the Cayuse Hill parcel [66.3 acres between the Clark Fork River and the frontage road (see Figures 31 and 32)] was eliminated from further consideration because it failed to meet the exchange criteria. However, at the specific request of the Mineral County Commissioners, DNRC agreed to further review the suitability of the Cayuse Hill parcel for inclusion in the exchange, and it was included in the proposal forwarded to the Land Board for preliminary approval, which was granted in July, 2005.





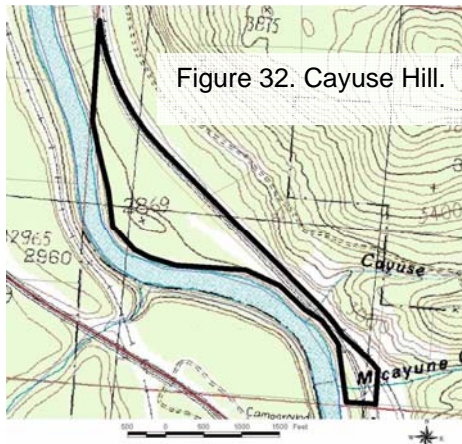


Figure 32. Cayuse Hill.

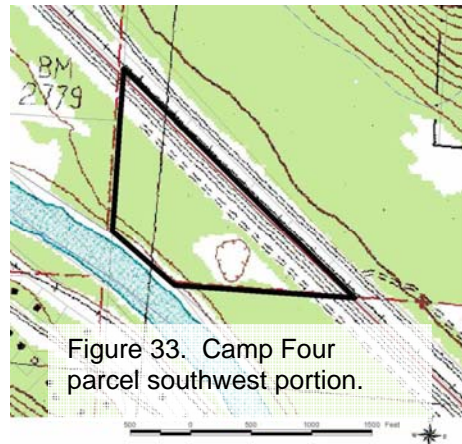


Figure 33. Camp Four parcel southwest portion.

Subsequent to that Land Board action, a preliminary estimate of values for land proposed for exchange in the Tarkio Land Exchange was completed in March of 2006. Although those values were not final, it was apparent that the value of State Trust Land far exceeded that of lands owned by Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT) and proposed for exchange, reinforcing the earlier decision to exclude the parcel from further consideration. The estimate of the fair market value for the Cayuse Hill parcel was very high in proportion to the total value of lands being proposed for exchange by FVLT. In addition, the value of a portion of the State-owned Camp 4 parcel (See Figures 31 and 33) was found to be much less than anticipated.

As a result of this new information and in response to a recommendation from DNRC staff and FVLT that was forwarded to the Director of DNRC, the decision was made to drop both the Cayuse Hill and the low value portion of the Camp 4 parcel from further consideration. This reduced the pool of candidate lands and allowed FVLT to avoid additional time and expense associated with environmental analysis and property assessment associated with these properties that would clearly not found suitable for inclusion in the exchange.

The rationale for dropping these specific tracts is as follows:

#### **Cayuse Hill Parcel:**

1. This 63 +/- acre parcel was estimated to be worth more than ½ the entire value of all FVLT property proposed for exchange to the State. Retaining this parcel in the exchange pool would necessitate dropping other high priority parcels for acquisition. It would also severely reduce the total acreage of land suitable for residential development that would become available in Mineral County as a result of the exchange.
2. This parcel has very high recreation values and high public usage including approximately 1 mile of easily accessible Clark Fork River frontage. The loss of this public resource was deemed inconsistent with one of the primary intents of the exchange – keeping lands with high public and conservation values in public ownership. Responses from

initial public scoping on this project confirmed that retaining publicly accessible riverfront is a primary concern to many individuals.

3. Due to the land exchange criteria related to stream and lake frontage, retention of this parcel in the land exchange would eliminate the possibility of considering any other State parcels with stream frontage from exchange consideration.
4. This parcel is within an area the State has proposed for further land consolidation (Lolo Exchange Proposal). Disposal of the Cayuse Hill parcel is inconsistent with acquisition of adjacent National Forest lands and consolidation of State Trust land.
5. The Mineral County Working Group, a collaborative effort of Mineral County citizens, the U.S. Forest Service, MT. FWP, and MDT, has identified the parcel, in its entirety, as a narrowly defined and key wildlife movement corridor and “linkage zone.”

**Camp 4 Parcel:**

1. The value of the (35 +/- acre) portion of the Camp 4 parcel between I-90 and the Clark Fork River (see Figure 33) has been estimated at \$2,000 per acre. The primary reason for the low value is due to an easement on the property held by the MDT. This easement (highway purposes) is for potential future gravel needs. Because of the uncertainty of future gravel use, a steep discount in the value of the property is necessary. DNRC believes future public value and market value for this property could be significantly higher than the current estimated value. DNRC does not believe it is in the best interests of the public or the State Trust to divest of this property at such a low price.
2. This parcel has potentially high recreation value including approximately 0.2 miles of Clark Fork River frontage. The loss of this public resource was deemed inconsistent with one of the primary intents of the exchange – keeping lands with high public and conservation values in public ownership.
3. Due to the land exchange criteria related to stream and lake frontage, retention of this parcel in the land exchange would reduce the possibility of considering any other State parcels with stream frontage from exchange consideration.

## D. Summary of Potential Impacts

Resource	Alternative A-No Action	Alternative B-Proposed Action
Geology, Soil Quality, Stability, and Moisture	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential soil erosion, low risk of impacts to geologic resources.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-minor soil disturbance and erosion. Low risk of impacts to geologic resources.
Water Quality, Quantity, Distribution	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-minor decrease in quantity of sub-surface water on those parcels.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-minor decrease in quantity of sub-surface water. Access to St. Regis sewer system would mitigate impacts to water quality on that parcel.
Air Quality	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-likely temporary increase in emissions during construction/development, potential increase in wood smoke from residences.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-likely temporary increase in emissions during construction/development, potential increase in wood smoke from residences.
Vegetation Cover, Quantity, Quality	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-likely decrease in native vegetation, increase in non-native ornamental vegetation. Potential for noxious weeds to colonize/spread.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-likely decrease in native vegetation, increase in non-native ornamental vegetation. Potential for noxious weeds to colonize/spread.
Terrestrial, Avian, and Aquatic Life/Habitats	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-likely small decrease in wildlife abundance. Potential habitat fragmentation.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-likely minor decrease in wildlife abundance. Overall impact would be minor.
Unique, Endangered, Fragile, Limited, Env. Resources	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-further fragmentation of habitat negatively impacts sensitive species.	FVLT lands-positive impact for large mammals as transfer of FVLT lands to State would form contiguous blocks and improve linkage corridors. DNRC lands-few.
Historical and Archaeological Sites	DNRC lands-No Effect* FVLT lands-No Effect	FVLT lands-No Effect* DNRC lands-No Effect
Aesthetics	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-negative impacts to Alberton Gorge viewshed.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-minor impacts for adjacent landowners.
Environmental Resources of Land, Water, Air, Energy	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-moderate increase in demand for these resources	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-minor increase in demand for these resources.
Other Env. Documents Pertaining to Area	No negative cumulative impacts are expected to occur as a result of current or proposed private, state, or federal actions.	No negative cumulative impacts are expected to occur as a result of current or proposed private, state, or federal actions.
Human Health and Safety	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-minor risks normally associated with development	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-minor risks normally associated with development

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Alternative A-No Action</b>	<b>Alternative B-Proposed Action</b>
Industrial, Commercial/ Agricultural Activities	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential for small increase in commercial activity.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-potential for small increase in commercial activity.
Quantity, Distribution of Employment	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands- temporary, minor increase in construction jobs.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-temporary, minor increase in construction jobs.
Local and State Tax Base and Revenue	DNRC lands-none FVLT lands-\$538.43 Figure would increase after development	FVLT lands-none DNRC lands-\$1843.23 Figure would increase after development
Locally Adopted Env. Plans, Goals	DNRC lands-none FVLT lands-none	FVLT lands-none DNRC lands-none
Access, Quality of Recreational, Wilderness Activities	DNRC lands-none FVLT lands-loss of access.	FVLT lands-greater access. DNRC lands-minor loss of access.
Density/Distrib. of Population, Housing	DNRC lands-none FVLT lands-small increase in dispersed housing development	FVLT lands-none DNRC lands-small increase in consolidated housing development.
Social Structures, Mores,	DNRC lands-none FVLT lands-loss of recreational access	FVLT lands-none DNRC lands-likely minor loss of recreational access.
Cultural Uniqueness, Diversity	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-loss of recreational access	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-likely minor loss of recreational access.
Other Appropriate Social, Econ. Circumstances	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-likely dispersed development creates demand for new infrastructure and services.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-consolidated development in suitable areas reduces negative impacts.

\* Any future impacts would be as a result of timber harvest or other management by the State of the Trust Lands, and would be subject to MEPA, and DNRC regulations.

### **III. IMPACTS TO THE HUMAN AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

#### **A. Impacts to Geology, Soil Quality, Stability, and Moisture**

##### Existing Environment

No especially unusual geologic features are present on any of the parcels offered for exchange by DNRC or FVLT.

FVLT is offering mineral estate in the Tarkio Flat parcels (530.0 acres.) The remaining parcels, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge, are surface estate only. The State of Montana holds the mineral estate to Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge. The State Trust mineral property proposed for transfer totals

504.46 acres. The State Trust owns all mineral rights in these parcels. All are currently unleased, and there is no indication of previous mineral leasing activity in our records. The mineral parcel to be acquired and the various State parcels proposed for disposal are located in a geologic province noted for historic metalliferous mining activities along various drainages connecting to the Clark Fork River. The specific parcels are located on or in close proximity to the river. While it is possible for the exchange tracts to exhibit some mineralization, the potential for mineral presence in commercial quantities is low. There is no coal potential, and oil and gas potential is low to zero. Speculative mineral potential of all parcels is equivalent per acre. Whole estate ownership is maintained.

In short, the proposed exchange would have no substantive impact on the asset value or development potential of the School Trust.

#### Impacts from No Action Alternative A

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any future impacts to these lands as a result of management would be examined under MEPA.

##### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development is difficult to predict, but is likely to include some soil disturbance and erosion associated with equipment operation and development. Any development on the steep slopes of the Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge parcels would likely result in erosion, if not mitigated. There is low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to geologic resources or soil stability.

#### Impacts from Action Alternative B

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and subsequently sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development is likely to include some soil disturbance and erosion associated with equipment operation or development. Any future development would be subject to Montana State law, Mineral County ordinances and subdivision regulations. There is low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to geologic resources or soil stability.

## **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as part of the Trust Lands. Any future impacts to these lands as a result of management would be examined under MEPA and would be subject to DNRC regulations.

### Cumulative Effects

No other projects within the analysis area are anticipated to affect soils or geology. There is unlikely to be any difference to cumulative impacts to geologic resources between Alternatives A and B.

## **B. Impacts to Water Quality, Quantity and Distribution**

### Existing Environment

The Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge parcels both contain short (< 100 feet) intermittent streams, neither of which is fish bearing or have water rights associated with them. The Camp Four parcel contains approximately 600 feet of an intermittent stream (not a fishable resource) and associated spring seep and wetland. The State holds no water rights to this resource (an adjacent landowner owns that water right). No water quality departures are known and water quality is assumed to be good in these resources. Several parcels (Cyr Bridge, Freezeout Gulch, Slowey Riverfront and Tarkio Railroad) have frontage on the lower Clark Fork River, which has a water quality classification of 5, meaning one or more uses are impaired. The impaired beneficial uses, which are only being partially supported, are cold water fishery and aquatic life. Agricultural and industrial uses are fully supported.

### Impacts from No Action Alternative A

## **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any future impacts to the water resources on DNRC lands as a result of timber harvest or land management activities would be examined under MEPA, follow DNRC regulations, and would abide by all water quality laws and rules of the State of Montana. Any future timber harvest on the Camp Four parcel would likely have a small impact on the intermittent stream, seep, and wetland, including but not limited to an increase in water temperature, suspended solids, dissolved solids, and decrease in dissolved oxygen.

## **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development is

difficult to predict, but it is likely that most development would include the drilling of wells, which could decrease the quantity of sub-surface water on these parcels. Any development would be subject to water quality laws and rules of the State of Montana, county ordinances, and subdivision requirements.

#### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development is difficult to predict, but it is likely that most development would include the drilling of water wells, which would decrease the quantity of sub-surface water on these parcels. Access to the St. Regis sewer system would mitigate possible impacts to water quality from the development of this parcel. It is generally preferable to develop served areas rather than unserved areas.

##### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as State Trust lands. Any future projects on these lands would be examined under MEPA and designed to limit or mitigate impact to water resources.

#### Cumulative Effects

No other DNRC or FVLT projects within the analysis area are anticipated to affect water quality, quantity, or distribution. There is unlikely to be any difference to cumulative impacts to water quality parameters between Alternatives A and B. No shoreline developments or management disturbances are expected that would affect water quality or fish habitat within the No Action or Action Alternatives, based on required implementation of county water quality regulations and appropriate mitigations.

## **C. Impacts to Air Quality**

#### Existing Environment

All parcels considered for exchange are located in rural areas of western Montana with good air quality.

#### Impacts from No Action Alternative A

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any future impacts to air quality as a result of management would be minor.

### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development on air quality is difficult to predict, but it is likely that any development would include the use of heavy machinery that would create minor amounts of dust and vehicle emissions. Wood smoke may increase if residents use wood stoves for heating.

### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch, would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development is difficult to predict, but it is likely that most development would include the use of heavy equipment and machinery, which would create minor amounts of dust and vehicle emissions. Wood smoke may increase if residents use wood stoves for heating.

### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as State Trust lands. Future activities upon DNRC lands will be examined under MEPA, follow DNRC regulations, and would abide by the Federal Clean Air and Water Acts. Therefore, any future impacts to local air quality as a result of management are expected to be minor.

### Cumulative Effects

No other projects within the analysis area are expected to cause negative impacts to air quality. No difference in cumulative effects is expected between the Action and No Action Alternatives. Any development in either Alternative would be subject to all applicable Federal, State, and County laws and ordinances.

## **D. Impacts to Vegetation Cover, Quantity, and Distribution**

### Existing Environment

Vegetation on all parcels considered for exchange is predominantly second-growth Douglas fir and ponderosa pine, with associated shrubs, grasses and forbs. The Tarkio parcels contain some stands of century old ponderosa pine, but no old-growth. Noxious weeds such as spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*), leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), st. johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*), and sulfur cinquefoil (*Potentilla recta*) have been observed at low densities on some or all of the parcels considered for exchange. No known occurrences of Montana's four threatened or endangered or proposed threatened plants occur in the parcels considered for exchange (Montana Natural Heritage Program, 2006).



#### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any impacts to the vegetation on these parcels from future management would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

##### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development on vegetation is difficult to predict, but would likely include a decrease in abundance of native vegetation in areas of development due to the construction of roads, homes, supplemental buildings, and associated landscaping. The types and numbers of non-native plant species, such as ornamental shrubs, grasses, and trees, will likely increase as a result of landscaping. Future development would likely cause an increase in noxious weed species in the area. Subdivision and development would cause an increase in vehicular traffic and disturbed areas for weed species to colonize.

#### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch, would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development on vegetation is difficult to predict, but would likely include a decrease in abundance of native vegetation in areas of development due to the construction of roads, homes, supplemental buildings, and associated landscaping. The types and numbers of non-native plant species, such as ornamental shrubs, trees, and grasses, will likely increase as a result of residential landscaping. Future development would likely cause an increase in noxious weed species in the area. Subdivision and development would cause an increase in vehicular traffic and disturbed areas for weed species to colonize

##### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as State Trust Lands. Future activities upon DNRC lands will be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

#### Cumulative Effects

No other projects within the analysis area are expected to cause negative impacts to vegetation resources, including wetlands and threatened and endangered plants.

No difference in cumulative effects is expected between the Action and No Action Alternatives.

## **E. Impacts to Terrestrial, Avian, and Aquatic Life and Habitats**

### Existing Environment

#### **DNRC Lands**

The St. Regis parcel provides winter habitat for white-tailed deer and occasionally elk and moose. The Slowey Triangle parcel has some value for white-tailed deer and elk, but not much because it is surrounded by roads. The Slowey Riverfront parcel also has limited value to larger mammals because it is difficult for animals to access. A map produced by the Mineral County Wildlife Movement Areas Working Group in 2005 shows wildlife movement areas that include two corridors bracketing, but not including the Slowey Riverfront and Slowey Triangle parcels. Discussions with working group members indicate that geographic considerations, the Interstate highway, frontage road and adjacent development all seem to funnel wildlife activity and movement around those parcels.

The riparian corridor present in the Cyr Bridge, Freezeout Gulch, and Slowey Riverfront parcels provides habitat for many types of birds, but bald eagles do not currently nest there. The Camp Four and Chute Gulch parcels both provide important winter range for elk. Flammulated owls also might use these parcels. Bull trout, a listed threatened species, and westslope cutthroat trout occur in low densities in the Clark Fork River which is adjacent to portions of some of the parcels. While there have been no verified observations of gray wolves, Canada lynx, or grizzly bears in any of the parcels considered for exchange, it is possible that those species have passed through some or all of the areas.

#### **FVLT Lands**

The Tarkio parcels provide important thermal cover for 60-100 elk in the late winter and spring, and the Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge parcels provide white-tailed deer and song bird habitat. The Freezeout and Cyr Bridge parcels are both small parts of a larger linkage zone identified by the Mineral County Wildlife Areas Working Group. Bull trout, a listed threatened species, and westslope cutthroat trout, a sensitive species, occur in low densities in the Clark Fork River which is adjacent to portions of some of the parcels. While there have been no verified observations of gray wolves, Canada lynx, or grizzly bears in any of the parcels considered for exchange, it is possible that those species have passed through some or all of the areas.

#### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life on or adjacent to these parcels from future timber harvest would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

##### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development on terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life is difficult to predict, but would likely include a small decrease in abundance of terrestrial and avian species in areas of development. White-tailed deer and other species that have adapted well to the presence of humans would be less impacted than elk and other less-acclimated species. Additional residential development in this area would increase the potential for conflict with animals such as bears and wolves. Wolves are not yet documented as occurring in these parcels but it is likely that they will be in the next 2-3 years. Black bears are present in these parcels and increased development provides more opportunities for them to get into trash, bird feeders, etc., but overall these potential impacts are expected to be limited.

The development of the Tarkio parcels would impact area elk as important winter thermal cover would be lost. It is unlikely that bull trout would be impacted under this alternative, as their density is low in this section of the river and any development that might occur would be subject to State laws protecting water quality. It is also possible that any impacts from development along the Clark Fork River would be mitigated by deed restrictions prior to sale to private buyers.

#### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development on terrestrial and avian life is difficult to predict, but would likely include a small decrease in abundance of terrestrial and avian species in areas of development. White-tailed deer and other species who have adapted well to the presence of humans would be less impacted than elk and other non-acclimated species. Most wildlife in this area is already fairly accustomed to the type of rural development that would likely follow in this alternative and the overall impact is expected to be small. Additional residential development in this area would increase the potential for conflict with animals such as bears and wolves. Wolves are not yet documented as occurring in these

parcels but it is likely that they will be in the next 2-3 year. Black bears are present in these parcels and increased development gives more opportunities for them to get into trash, bird feeders, etc., but overall these potential impacts are expected to be limited.

The largest impact under this alternative would be the loss of some of the elk winter range in the Chute Gulch and especially Camp Four parcels. Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout are not expected to be impacted under this alternative, as no shoreline developments or management disturbances are expected that would affect water quality or fish habitat. It is also possible that any impacts from development along the Clark Fork River would be mitigated by deed restrictions prior to sale to private buyers.

### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as State Trust lands. Any impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life on or adjacent to these parcels from future timber harvest would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

### Cumulative Effects

No other projects within the analysis area are expected to cause negative impacts to terrestrial, avian, or aquatic life resources. Even though development would occur in either Alternative, the Action Alternative would result in less impact to wildlife, because the habitat that would potentially be lost to development is of less wildlife value than what would be gained from the exchange. The Slowey Triangle and Slowey Riverfront parcels, for example, are difficult for all animals but birds to safely access, and the St. Regis parcel is already partially developed and adjacent to town. The FVLT parcels, however, are not close to development and are adjacent to large blocks of State Trust land. Nearly all wildlife benefits from an increase in contiguous areas of potential habitat, and the Action Alternative would take parcels out of checkerboard ownership and into adjoining blocks.

## **F. Impacts to Unique, Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resources**

### Existing Environment

Nearly all of western Montana is identified as being within the range of grizzly bears, gray wolves, Canada lynx, and bald eagles. While there have been no verified observations of wolves, lynx, or grizzly bears in any of the parcels considered for exchange, it is possible that those species have passed through some or all of the areas. It is almost certain that bald eagles occasionally utilize habitat along the Clark Fork River adjacent to several parcels proposed for exchange, even though there are currently no nests in those areas. Bull trout, a Listed Threatened Species, and westslope cutthroat trout, a Sensitive Species,

occur in low densities in the Clark Fork River which adjoins portions of several of the parcels. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified two sensitive plant species that occurred within the larger project area but not within actual parcels proposed for exchange.

As mentioned earlier, the Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge parcels have been identified as important linkage zones by the Mineral County Wildlife Areas Working Group. A small seep and associated wetland occurs on the Camp Four parcel.

#### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources on or adjacent to these parcels from future DNRC management would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

##### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of the Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge parcels might impact the movement/migration of animals, as these two parcels have been identified as being part of an important linkage zone. Because there are no known occurrences of any listed or proposed threatened or endangered plant or animal species on any of the parcels considered or exchange, impacts to these resources would likely be small. It is also unlikely that bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout would be impacted, as no shoreline developments or management disturbances are expected that would affect water quality or fish habitat on parcels adjacent to the Clark Fork River. Residential development on these lands may increase the potential for conflict between wolves, bears, and homeowners, and/or domesticated animals such as livestock and pets.

#### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The potential impacts from the sale of these properties and their eventual development is difficult to predict but are unlikely to cause substantial impacts to any unique, endangered, or limited environmental resources. The small seep, wetland, and intermittent stream on the Camp Four parcel might be impacted under private development. Because there are no known occurrences of any listed or proposed threatened or endangered plant or



animal species on any of the parcels considered or exchange, impacts to these resources would likely be small. Residential development on these lands may increase the potential for conflict between wolves, bears, and homeowners, and/or domesticated animals such as livestock and pets.

### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as State Trust lands. Any impacts to unique, endangered, or limited environmental resources on or adjacent to these parcels from future DNRC management would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations. A transfer of these parcels to State ownership could improve linkage corridors for large mammal movement like wolves, bears (both grizzly and black), lynx, as well as big game like elk and deer.

### Cumulative Effects

While there have been no verified observations of gray wolves, Canada lynx, or grizzly bears in any of the parcels considered for exchange, it is possible that those species have passed through some or all of the areas. If these species do, in fact, occur in this area, however sparsely or infrequently, the Action Alternative B would result in less negative impact to these and other wildlife species, as that Alternative would take state-owned land out of checkerboard ownership and into contiguous blocks, thereby improving management of those lands, increasing protection of rare species, providing greater habitat integrity and value, and reducing chances of human/animal conflict.

Under an April 30, 2003 directive, DNRC must consider the following species in the planning and evaluation of possible projects. For the purpose of comparison of Alternatives, the species have been listed in a table format along with probability of that species presence and projected impact to that species from development or management of that parcel under the two Alternatives. The terms low, moderate, and high-value habitat refer to those parcels' average value to that particular species, not the parcel's intrinsic value.

<b>Threatened or Endangered</b>	<b>Is species present in parcels proposed for exchange?</b>	<b>Projected Impacts from No Action Alternative A</b>	<b>Projected Impacts from Proposed Action Alternative B</b>
Bald Eagle	Possible but not documented	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-few. No shoreline development is expected.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-few. No shoreline development is expected.
Grizzly Bear, Gray Wolves, Lynx	Possible but not documented	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential loss of moderate-value habitat	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-potential loss of low-value habitat
Bull Trout	In Clark Fork River adjacent to several parcels	DNRC lands-none FVLT lands-none	FVLT lands-none DNRC lands-none

<b>Sensitive Species</b>	<b>Is species present in parcels proposed for exchange?</b>	<b>Projected Impacts from No Action Alternative A</b>	<b>Projected Impacts from Proposed Action Alternative B</b>
Black-backed Woodpecker, Flammulated Owl	Likely	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential loss of moderate-value habitat	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-potential loss of moderate-value habitat.
Pileated Woodpecker	Possible but not documented	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential loss of high-value habitat.	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-potential loss of moderate-value habitat
Columbia Sharp-tailed grouse, Mountain Plover	Not present	DNRC lands-NA FVLT lands-NA	FVLT lands-NA DNRC lands-NA
Common Loon	Unlikely	DNRC lands-none FVLT lands-none	FVLT lands-none DNRC lands-none
Harlequin Duck	Possible but not documented	DNRC lands-none FVLT lands-none	FVLT lands-none DNRC lands-none
Fisher	Possible but not documented	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential loss of moderate-value habitat	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-potential loss of low-value habitat
Northern Bog Lemming	Unlikely but possible	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential loss of low-value habitat	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-potential loss of low-value habitat
Westslope Cutthroat Trout	Present in Clark Fork River	DNRC lands-none FVLT lands-none	FVLT lands-none DNRC lands-none

\*Threatened, endangered, and sensitive species information courtesy of Montana Natural History Program and Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

<b>Big-Game Species</b>	<b>Is species present in parcels proposed for exchange?</b>	<b>Projected Impacts from No Action Alternative A</b>	<b>Projected Impacts from Proposed Action Alternative B</b>
Moose	Present but not common	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential loss of low-value habitat	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-potential loss of low-value habitat
Elk, White-tailed Deer, Mule Deer	Present	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential loss of high-value habitat	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-potential loss Of moderate-value habitat
Black Bear	Present	DNRC lands-few* FVLT lands-potential loss of moderate-value habitat	FVLT lands-few* DNRC lands-potential loss of low-value habitat

\* Any future impacts would be as a result of timber harvest or other management of State Trust Lands, and would be subject to MEPA, and DNRC regulations.

No other projects within the analysis area are expected to cause negative impacts to unique, endangered, or limited environmental resources.

## **G. Impacts to Historical and Archaeological Sites**

### Existing Environment:

A search of the DNRC's records indicates that several previous cultural/paleontological resource inventories have occurred within all of the State parcels considered for exchange (Dutton and Schreier 1996; Passman 1985, 1988; Rennie n.d.; Ryan 1969; Wood 1994). With these previous inventories, virtually all of the acreages contained within the subject State parcels have been inspected for cultural and paleontological resources to BLM Class III standards.

The route of the old Mullan Road passes through the Tarkio Flats, Camp Four and Chute Gulch parcels. The Mullan Road is considered a Heritage Property under the State Antiquities Act (Historic Property under the National Historic Preservation Act). Transfer of the State parcels containing Mullan Road route will cause No Effect to this Heritage Property.

During the course of the aforementioned inventories, cultural resource sites were identified and formally recorded. Site 24MN55 is the remnants of a large, historic lumber camp primarily situated in a portion of Section 12, T16N R26W, referred to in this document as the Camp Four parcel. Site 24MN164 is the Mineral County segment of the Milwaukee Railroad. The railroad grade passes through the Chute Gulch, Camp Four, Slowey Triangle and Slowey Riverfront parcels.

Site 24MN164 (the railroad grade) has been evaluated and determined to be a Heritage Property (cultural resources potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places). However, because the railroad ROW is patented and the State does not own it, the DNRC could not transfer the railroad grade with the adjoining land and therefore there would be No Effect to this Heritage Property with the proposed land exchange. Site 24MN55 has not been evaluated and would be prior to transfer of the Camp Four parcel in compliance with the Montana State Antiquities Act.

### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any impacts to cultural resources on or adjacent to these parcels from future State management would be examined under MEPA, State law, and DNRC regulations.

#### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of these parcels would be unlikely to have an impact on any historical or archaeological resources.

## Impacts from Action Alternative B:

### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. Site 24MN55 has not been evaluated and would be prior to transfer of the Camp Four parcel in compliance with the Montana State Antiquities Act. No other significant impacts to historical or archaeological resources have been identified.

### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed State Trust lands. Any impacts to historical or archaeological resources on or adjacent to these parcels from future DNRC management would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

## **H. Impacts to Aesthetics**

### Existing Environment

None of the parcels considered for exchange are located on any prominent topographic feature. Several of the parcels, such as Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch are visible from the Frontage Road and to a lesser degree from I-90. The Slowey Riverfront, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge parcels are visible to boaters on the Clark Fork River. The Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, and St. Regis parcels are visible from adjacent parcels.

## Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any impacts to the aesthetics of these parcels from future DNRC management would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of these parcels would be likely have an impact on the aesthetic value of these parcels. Development of these parcels would have an impact on the aesthetic values of these lands. The biggest impact would be to the Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge parcels, because those parcels are in the Alberton Gorge viewshed, and there is no other development in the vicinity. Possible future development of the Tarkio Railroad parcel would be mitigated by the covenants in place on that parcel. The “wilderness feel” of the Gorge due to

its current undeveloped State is extremely important to area users, tourists, and local businesses that cater to those tourists.

#### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. Development of these parcels would have an impact on the aesthetic value of these lands, but would not be significant because of existing development (mostly rural residences) on adjacent parcels. The development of the Slowey Triangle parcel could impact aesthetic values for adjacent private landowners.

##### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as part of the Trust Lands. Any impacts to aesthetic values on these parcels from DNRC management harvest would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

#### Cumulative Impacts

There would be no difference in cumulative effects between Alternatives A and B.

## **I. Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, Air, or Energy**

#### Existing Environment

There is currently very little development on the parcels considered for exchange. There are four modest residences on the St. Regis parcel whose inhabitants lease land from DNRC and which place very little demand on environmental resources.

#### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any additional demands on environmental resources from future DNRC management on these parcels would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

##### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of these parcels would be likely place a greater demand



on environmental resources such as land, water, air and energy. While development is likely to occur in either Alternative, development on these parcels would place a greater demand on services than development on the DNRC parcels because of their greater distance from other development.

#### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

##### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of these parcels would likely place a greater demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air and energy. While development would likely occur in either of the Alternatives, these parcels are more suited for development than the other parcels, and represent less of a future demand on environmental resources. The St. Regis parcel, in particular, has sewer availability and the potential for municipal water service.

##### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as part of the Trust Lands. Any additional demands on environmental resources from DNRC management on these parcels would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

#### Cumulative Impacts

There would be fewer negative cumulative effects under the Action Alternative B.

## **J. Other Environmental Documents Pertaining to the Area**

### **Environmental Documents**

- DNRC Real Estate Management Plan and EIS
- DNRC/Lolo National Forest Land Exchange EA
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and U.S. Forest Service, 2003. *Alborton Gorge Land Exchange Environmental Assessment*. Prepared by Dalbey Resources

### **Recent Studies**

- Servheen, Waller and Sandstrom, 2003. *Identification and Management of Linkage Zones for Wildlife between Large Blocks of Public Land in the Northern Rocky Mountains*. US Fish and Wildlife Service.

- Mineral County Wildlife Movement Areas Working Group, 2005. *Mineral County Wildlife Movement Areas* (map).

### Cumulative Impacts

No negative cumulative impacts are expected to occur as a result of current or proposed private, State, or federal actions in the analysis area.

## **K. Impacts to Human Health and Safety**

### Existing Environment

On the Tarkio railroad parcel, the railroad grade sits on a high bench about 200 ft. above the river. Although the area has been heavily modified due to the railroad grade and substation, there has been no evidence of hazardous materials. The four residences on the St. Regis parcel are likely to have small quantities of hazardous materials and petroleum materials stored on their leased property for household use. There are no other known occurrences of hazardous materials that exist on any of the other parcels.

### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Any impacts to human health and safety from DNRC management on these parcels would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

#### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of these parcels would be likely to cause a small increase in risk to human health and safety, but there are no inherent risks in the development of these particular sites.

### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of these parcels would likely cause an increase in risk to human health and safety, but would be less than if the development occurred elsewhere, due to the availability of sewer service in St. Regis. There are no inherent risks in the development of these particular sites.

### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as StateTrust lands. Any impacts to human health and safety from future timber harvests on these parcels would be examined under MEPA and follow DNRC regulations.

### Cumulative Impacts

There would be fewer negative cumulative effects under the Action Alternative B.

## **L. Impacts to Commercial, Industrial, or Agricultural Activities and Production**

### Existing Environment

There are no current industrial or commercial activities or production on any of the parcels considered for exchange. Grazing leases are currently held on the Camp Four and Chute Gulch parcels.

### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under Statemanagement. There would be no anticipated impacts to industrial, commercial or agricultural activities from future DNRC management on these parcels.

#### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of these parcels might cause a very small increase in commercial activity in the area. Residents might engage in extremely small-scale agricultural activities.

### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of these parcels might cause a very small increase in commercial activity in the area. Residents might engage in extremely small-scale agricultural activities.

#### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be

managed as StateTrust lands. There would be no anticipated impacts to industrial, commercial or agricultural activities from future DNRC management on these parcels.

## **M. Impacts to Quantity and Distribution of Employment**

NONE—The proposed Alternative is not anticipated to create, move or eliminate any jobs. It is anticipated that there would be a short-term spike in development following the sale of the parcels in either alternative, accompanied by temporary jobs in the construction industry, but long-term employment figures are not expected to change.

## **N. Impacts to Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue**

### Existing Environment

Current annual tax revenues from FVLT parcels.

Tarkio Flat-	\$389.86
Tarkio Railroad-	77.04
Freezeout Gulch-	62.19
Cyr Bridge-	8.63
Total	\$538.43
Tax revenues from DNRC parcels	\$0*

\* Cabin site improvements are private property and owners are taxed individually.

### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. There would be no change to tax revenue for these parcels.

#### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The sale and probable development of these parcels would likely cause a small increase in tax revenue to Mineral County.

## Impacts from Action Alternative B:

### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch, would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The transfer of these lands to private ownership would result in a small increase in tax revenue for the county. These figures do not reflect increased revenue that would ultimately result from future development of the parcels, as specific development and related revenue projections would be extremely hypothetical.

Projected tax revenues from DNRC parcels transferred to FVLT (estimates provided by Anthony Francesconi, Montana Dept. Revenue Appraiser, Mineral County.)

St. Regis parcel-	\$177.56
St. Regis residential lots	\$1392.13*
Sloway Triangle (2 lots)	\$678.66
Sloway Riverfront	\$62.13
Camp Four	\$134.53
Chute Gulch	\$76.88
Total	\$2,521.89

\* represents land values w/o improvements

### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and therefore would not generate any tax revenue for Mineral County.

### Cumulative Impacts

While in either Alternative some lands would be moving into private ownership and generating tax revenue and some lands would be moving into State ownership and thus not subject to county taxes, the parcels currently owned by DNRC are thought to have greater immediate development potential than FVLT lands, and would ultimately generate more tax revenue for Mineral County.

## **O. Impacts to Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals**

### Existing Environment

There are no overlapping environmental plans or goals that the proposed exchange would impact.



## **P. Impacts to Access and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities**

### Existing Environment

Parcels currently owned by the State are open to public access, and receive light to heavy recreational use by hunters, hikers, and ORVs. The Lower Clark Fork River also receives heavy recreational use by floaters and anglers.

### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. Opportunities for public access would not change.

#### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. Recreational access would likely be prohibited on these parcels unless purchased by a conservation buyer. The closure of these lands to public access would also greatly reduce access to State lands adjacent to the private land, especially the Tarkio parcels.

### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. Recreational access would likely be prohibited on these parcels unless purchased by a conservation buyer. A recreational trail easement would be put in place on the Camp Four parcel prior to sale to ensure continued public access to adjacent federal lands.

#### **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as State Trust Lands. Opportunities for public access to these parcels and adjacent State lands would greatly increase. Opportunities to access State land along the Clark Fork River would also increase, via the Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge parcels. In addition, there would be a significant reduction in property boundaries, which makes it much easier for recreational users to avoid unintentional trespass.

### Cumulative Impacts

Some public access will likely be lost in either Alternative, but the public seems much more concerned about the possibility of losing access to the Tarkio tracts and adjoining State land than any other parcel. The Tarkio tracts probably have the highest recreational value of any of the parcels; therefore, Alternative B would have fewer negative impacts to this important resource than Alternative A.

## **Q. Impacts to Density and Distribution of Population and Housing**

### Existing Environment

All of the DNRC parcels and two of the FVLT parcels (Tarkio Flats and Tarkio Railroad) slated for exchange are in areas with existing rural development. Only Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge are in areas with no adjacent development.

### Impacts from No Action Alternative A:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would not be exchanged and would remain under State management. There are no current plans that would result in impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing from future DNRC management on these parcels.

#### **FVLT Lands**

Under the No Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch, and Cyr Bridge) would be sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of the parcels would cause a minor increase in the density and distribution of population and housing in those parcels and the larger area. Deed restrictions on the Tarkio Railroad parcel will further limit any impacts to density and distribution of population and housing. Due to the lack of practical access to the Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge parcels the potential for impacts is negligible .

### Impacts from Action Alternative B:

#### **DNRC Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC lands (St. Regis, Slowey Triangle, Slowey Riverfront, Camp Four, and Chute Gulch) would be transferred to FVLT and sold to private buyers. The sale and potential development of these parcels would cause a minor increase in the density and distribution of population and housing in those parcels and the larger area. These parcels are better suited for residential development than the FVLT lands because they are located in less environmentally sensitive areas and are adjacent to areas with existing development. It is preferable to keep development consolidated as much as possible to limit environmental impacts.

## **FVLT Lands**

Under the Action Alternative, FVLT lands (Tarkio Flats, Tarkio Railroad, Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge) would be transferred to the State and would be managed as State Trust Lands. There would be no anticipated impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing from future DNRC management on these parcels.

### Cumulative Impacts

Dispersed rural development seems benign but has a significant negative affect on wildlife populations, as their habitat becomes increasingly fragmented and their movement becomes ever more restricted. While most animal species are affected, large species are affected most, with the exception of species such as white-tailed and mule deer, which have become so acclimated to human development that their numbers usually increase in lightly developed areas. Dispersed development also increases the potential for animals such as black bears to come into conflict with humans, which can often result in expensive efforts to relocate the offending bear, or lethal control. In light of these factors, Alternative B has fewer negative impacts than Alternative A, as development would be more consolidated and adjacent to existing areas of development.

## **R. Impacts to Social Structures and Mores**

### Cumulative effects

Both Alternatives would result in some reduction in opportunities to recreate in customarily open areas, but Alternative B would retain more of these opportunities and thus protect that lifestyle better than Alternative A.

## **S. Impacts to Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity**

Please see Section G for a discussion of cultural resources and Section O for anticipated changes in recreation and public access.

## **T. Impacts to Other Appropriate Social and Economic Circumstances**

### Existing Environment

All of the DNRC parcels and two of the FVLT parcels (Tarkio Flats and Tarkio Railroad) slated for exchange are in areas with existing rural development. Only Freezeout Gulch and Cyr Bridge are in areas with no adjacent development.

### Cumulative Impacts

During an initial evaluation of the proposed land exchange, the estimate of next 20 years income from FVLT parcels was \$555,000. The estimate of next 20 years income from DNRC parcels was \$346,352.

The proposed land exchange is expected to have little to no cumulative effect on social and economic circumstances in the area. Whether or not the exchange occurs, some rural development will occur, but the Action Alternative would steer development to areas more suitable for development and thereby reduce negative impacts to public recreation. Consolidated development such as the Action Alternative would promote the use of existing government services such as roads, sewer, power, etc., rather than creating a demand for new infrastructure and services.

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